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CASTLES IN THE AIR.

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VOL. I.

CASTLES IN THE AIR.

A NOVEL.

BY MRS. GORE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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CASTLES IN THE AIR.

CHAPTER I.

A will most incorrect to Heaven,
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
An understanding simple and unschool'd.

SHAKSPEARE.

It requires some nerve to present oneself before the fastidious eye of the public, in the character of a hero of romance. When the late Lord D. appeared at a Florentine *bal costumé*, announcing himself as "Sir Richard Maltravers, the hero of his own novel," it was universally proposed to lay him on the shelf. But think twice, scornful reader, ere you so ignominiously dismiss the present pretendant to your notice. Unpromising subjects have originated capital works: witness the clever

comedy produced on the title of "Knitting Needles" by Kotzebue; after undertaking, for a wager, to write one on any subject suggested.

Insignificant, moreover, as you may presume me, if not exactly "*la rose, j'ai vécu avec elle.*" In these days of movement and fusion, the human particles of society become so strangely jostled together that "the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe;" and, though the little I have to tell of myself may be insufficient to command attention, I have as much right to be regarded—having been the companion of the most illustrious and eminent in the land—as Shakspeare's chair, to be sold at a guinea an inch to be cut up into snuff-boxes.

But not to hold you by the button too peremptorily, dear public, on the threshold of my adventures, let me present myself to your acquaintance as succinctly as King Hamlet's ghost in accosting the Prince his son; as Henry Wrottesley Powerscourt, only son of a Lieutenant-colonel of that name, who died early

in the present century, in command of a crack regiment of hussars,—still of so fiery a reputation that it may be as well to leave it nameless.

Jealous of her husband's posthumous renown, or perhaps ambitious of a pension, my mother was never weary of protesting that he fell a victim. to the results of a wound received in the Egyptian campaign. Perhaps so. But though his death occurred amidst the heroisms of the Peninsular War, the gallant—no matter what—happened at the time of his decease to be eating its turtle, and drinking its lime-punch in peace and great plenty at Bristol; and the regimental surgeons decided the poor Colonel's malady to be gout!

I have nothing to urge to the contrary. When the last military honours were rendered to my poor father, I was an infant in arms; three years younger than two sisters, whom the garrison sincerely pitied the young widow for having to maintain out of a jointure of eight hundred a year.

Considering how young a widow she was,

and that the perpetual spectacle of hussar pelisses, shakos and moustachios, is apt to dazzle and bewilder the female eye, Mrs. Powerscourt made exemplary proof of prudence. Instead of hazarding the struggle of London life, or frittering away her means in the penurious gentility of a watering-place, she settled at once in the country; hired what the house-agents call "a small, compact residence in an excellent neighbourhood, fit for the immediate occupation of a genteel family;" and cut all further connection with the

Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war.

Poor soul! She must have been a sadly victimized wife, if I am to judge of her conjugal resignation by her maternal subservience. The first thing I can remember is the tyranny exercised by my sisters, Dora and Emily, over a quiet gentlewoman in deep mourning, who, when not poring over an account-book, was weeping over a volume of occasional sermons. Not but that the account-books also had their share of tears. For she had a hard matter, I

have since understood, to bring my father's affairs into shape.

But by the time her toils as executrix were at an end, it proved as difficult to reduce Dora and Emily to order, as the Colonel's entanglements. The girls had been spoiled by their father; who compensated himself for his strictness of regimental discipline by the utmost laxity at home. Though he affected to dress the girls in uniform, and compelled my mother to bring them to every parade and review, to accustom them, as he said, to the smell of gunpowder, and fit them for soldiers' wives, their subordination did little honour to the corps; and the poor governess to whom they were consigned on our arrival at Hentsfield, to be instructed in the milder duties of their sex, had a sorry time of it. Their ponies were luckily sold, or there might have been some difficulty in inducing them to abjure the military seat inculcated by the deceased Colonel. But as far as climbing trees after birdsnests, or launching a punt upon the pond the moment the governess's back was turned, Dora and Emily were

still as much my superiors in accomplishments as in years.

Had my father survived his Aboukir wound, or Bristolian turtle a few years longer, as he had adopted his daughters as pets only as substitutes for the son of whom he was anxious to make a pickle, *their* childhood as well as my own might have passed more pleasantly. They would have had less to *un*-learn, and I, less to learn. As it was, I appeared from the first to be one too many in the family. When I saw the light, my mother being forced to devote to her dying husband the attentions usually bestowed on a new-born infant, was not at leisure to think about me till, grown out of season, like late asparagus or overgrown peas, my long coats were an eye-sore; and there were too many cares aching under her widow's cap to admit of my being as fondly cherished as my predecessors. Moreover, since the truth must out, I was anything but an engaging child. A nankin-coloured little urchin, with hair as straight and sallow as unbleached flax, afforded some pretext to my sisters for shrugging their

shoulders whenever I was smuggled out of the nursery.

An unwelcome child is sure to grow up shy and awkward. When I *did* appear in the drawing-room, I broke twice as much china, and trod on twice as many muslin dresses as other boys. Master Harry was, accordingly, pronounced to be "always in the way;" and from being shoved about by the servants, and snubbed by the governess (who had no notion of having me and my spelling-book foisted gratuitously into her school-room) I acquired a sort of uneasy reserve so much resembling sulkiness, that others beside my two sisters might be excused the mistake.

It was, in short, so often exclaimed in my hearing at Hentsfield, "What a blessing it will be when Harry is sent to school!" that in process of time, I began to think so too. My schoolfellows might trust me to go birdsnesting with them, which my sisters did *not;* and what schoolmaster on earth could be bitterer of discipline than Miss Primer? Nor, though the limited state of the family finances sentenced

me to the hulks of a country academy, did experience alter my views on the subject. I used to be almost sorry when the holidays brought me home to be bullied about leaving gravel-stains on the white stone hall and staircase.

My hair, meanwhile, remained as straight as ever—my manners as uncouth; and as there was nothing in my outward boy to flatter a mother's vanity, I was usually left at home when parties of pleasure were going on. But it was then I began to enjoy myself. Though deeply imbued with the boyish aversion avowed by Byron for Horace and Homer, I had an unbounded appetite for less profitable studies; and as, in addition to the British dramatists and British novelists contained in my mother's library, the drawing-room table was strewn with new works derived from the London library to which my self-governed sisters were subscribers, I was soon as deeply read in modern romance as the most literary of Brighton misses; not only Monk Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe, but all the trash of the Minerva press. My notions of life were consequently of the wildest description. A

paria among my kith and kin, I had no means of discovering that the exaggerated sketches which I mistook for portraits of human nature, resembled men and women in the same proportion as the daubings of a scene-painter the simple landscapes of nature; and just as a child confounds the Sultan with the Great Mogul who figures on a pack of cards, or, as Lactantius has told us, after Lucilius,

> Ut pueri infantes credunt signa omnia ahena
> Vivere et esse homines, sic isti omnia ficta
> Vera putant,

I implicitly believed in all the heroes of the literary sign-post.

My impressions of social morality, moreover, were of the lowest order; and by the time I had added the contents of a country-town library to those of the Bond Street book-box, was not only satisfied that every young Lord was a rake—every old one a political jobber—every dowager a manœuvrer intent on entrapping unwary youths into matrimony with her daughters—every attorney a pettifogger—and every guardian a rogue, but that my precocious

insight into the villanies of the world had made a man of me before my time. My sisters might call me a cub; but *I* conceived myself a fox!

I could not, however, conceal from myself that by others I was rated at a low figure. If my sisters took offence at the lankey youth with limp, straight hair, whose red fists protruded from an out-grown jacket, and whose bony ankles from his washed-out nankins, even my mother, whose maternal instincts ought to have blinded her to the trace of my dirty shoes in the hall, and my soiled hands in her dog's-eared British Novelists, (whose backs were fairly broken by being left sprawling on their faces wherever I chanced to leave off reading,) was as lynx-eyed to my defects as though "that slovenly fellow Harry" were not her only son.

Harassed by the perpetual recapitulation of my backslidings into fancying myself a victim, I began to meditate an elopement from Eagle House, according to the most approved rules of romance, for the chance of being picked up by a company of strolling players. Nay, I had even hankerings after an attempt at suicide, in

a weedy fish-pond, in our gardens. It had been more than once hinted to me by my sisters, that but for the necessity of laying by money out of the family income to purchase me a commission, their mother would manage to take them to town for a few weeks of the season;—that it was a great pity I had outgrown the navy;—that a brother of my mother, who resided in Barbadoes, had often expressed a wish to adopt some member of the family. And, as I had now outgrown by many inches the tallest of my fellow-martyrs at Eagle House, so that, in the cold winter nights it was difficult to enclose my longitude and latitude within limit of the exiguous bedstead calculated for the proportions of "young gentlemen from seven to fourteen years of age," I entertained serious fears that, as it was impossible to dwarf me into a school-boy for life, the two girls might eventually prevail on my mother to sentence me to centipedes and Guava jelly; or bury me alive in some ignominious counting-house betwixt Lombard Street and St. Paul's.

Every year of my life, in short, I learned to

regret, with bitterer yearnings, that the late gallant Colonel Powerscourt had not survived the marrow and fatness of Bristol to protect his only son against the tyrannies of female domination. To have been out-snubbed in my teens by the raillery of a couple of sisters, is a fact that will naturally induce every public man having been a public school-boy, to denounce me as "a spoon." But I doubt whether the bravest pickle ever turned out of Brocas would not have been tamed down, as I was, by the length, breadth, and thickness of the maternal oration bestowed on me when, in the fulness of my academic honours, I quitted the fat mutton and meagre scholarship of Eagle House, to settle in what she called "the bosom of my family."

"Above all, Harry," added she, after a lengthy inculcation of the minor morals appended by the pandects of fashion to the rigour of the law, "above all, be careful not to molest your sisters. Your school-boy ways are at present sadly at variance with the elegance of their habits. Pursue your daily studies,

therefore, in your own room; that Dora and Emily may retain undisturbed possession of the drawing-room in order to keep up their accomplishments."

I longed to inquire whether, among the latter, were included the flirtation of Emily with a captain of a regiment of lancers quartered in the neighbourhood; or Dora's more serious courtship by the second son of Squire Whichcote, the landlord of Hentsfield. But I was kept at too grave a distance by my mother to hazard such a flippancy. So long as Barbadoes and a clerkship were impending over me, my subordination was of a nature to have done honour to the rattan of the gallant —th.

Though within a month of eighteen, I was as docile as in my long clothes.

CHAPTER II.

This life, sae far 's I understand,
Is a' enchanted fairy land.

BURNS.

SUCH was the feverish agitation of my mind that night—my first of enfranchisement—my first under the maternal roof,—that I found it impossible to close my eyes. The bed to which I had looked forward as a bed of roses, seemed suddenly sprinkled with thorns. Hopeless of rest, I kept watching for the first glimmer of daylight—so tardy at that cheerless winter season; stationed at the window, staring out upon the darkness, with a vague sense that the obscure void on which I was gazing was desolate and dreary as the world to our first parents, when surveying its brambles from the threshold of Paradise.

But when the imperfect dawn that was "*più che notte e men' che giorno*" brightened into the gladness of day, and the features of the landscape surrounding Hentsfield became gradually visible,—distant spires—pleasant villages —cheerful mansion-houses—lordly turrets,—indications innumerable of civilization and prosperity,—my sense of desolation was lightened. An hour before, and it was difficult to imagine that the misty waste contained such stirring elements of life. Who could say but that the scene I had been so despondingly contemplating might not be equally pregnant? Charms which I knew not of might lie enveloped in the veil of twilight amid the landscape of my life; and the rising sun brighten into notice some glorious edifice, or reveal some cozy hamlet, to embellish the waste.

By degrees, my Castles in the Air began to assume so positive an outline as to divert my attention from the pleasant scene before me; and my reveries might have been prolonged into the self-deceptions of Perrette the milkmaid, when lo! a knock at my chamber-door recalled

me to myself. Alas! at the close of my reverie I woke to find myself neither a Knight Templar, nor Prester John, nor a Popular Member, nor the Astronomer Royal rejoicing over the discovery of a new planet; but simply an uncouth hobbledehoy, amenable to the drawing-room discipline of a lukewarm mother and a brace of worldly-minded sisters!—

The knock was perpetrated by a slipshod waiting-maid, who came to summon me to Mrs. Powerscourt's dressing-room. But as there still wanted more than an hour to the family-breakfast, conceiving that the message purported only to remind me that the recent schoolboy was expected to be an early riser, I was in no haste to obey the summons.

Before twenty minutes had elapsed, however, I was startled by a second knock and a new messenger; no longer the fretful waiting-maid, with whom, as mender of my linen and rebuker of my button-rending, I was on terms of perpetual warfare; but the only member of the household, for whom I had the smallest attachment;—an old gray-headed man, my father's

valet at the epoch of his marriage, and now the infirm major-domo of the family.

"I have been up for hours, Nicholls," said I, "but have not yet begun to dress. Send me in some hot water, and I will be with my mother in half an hour."

"If you *could* be so good as step with me in your dressing-gown, Sir," said the old fellow, "my missus would not detain you many minutes."

"My mother is not ill, I hope?" said I, almost alarmed at a message so conciliatory; for, sooth to say, both Mrs. Powerscourt and her daughters, and even Nicholls himself, were too apt to issue their requests in the imperative mood.

"No, Sir—no, Mr. Harry. But she wants particular to speak to you, Sir, about a letter from Lon'on."

While preparing to appear in her presence, I could not help opining that it might sometimes be a disadvantage to reside where the London letters were delivered at daybreak. But on arriving in my mother's dressing-room, I had no reason to think it early. She was not only dressed for

the day, but had already received visits from my sisters.

In spite of an unusual degree of courtesy in her deportment, I saw that the authoress of my days was prodigiously flustered; which ceased to surprise me on noticing in her hand one of those solidly-folded letters, superscribed in a clerkly hand and sealed with a wafer, such as, during my childish days, which were those of her executorship and stormy adjustment of my father's affairs, were apt to put her fearfully out of sorts.

"A bill, for a thousand!" thought I;—and I was proceeding to trust that, for *her* sake, it might not be a long one, when, to my great amazement, I saw it was addressed to

"Henry Wrottesley Powerscourt, Esq.!"

The first time in my life I had ever seen the gratifying qualification of "Esq." attached to my name! Already, I felt myself rise to the altitude of my tail-coat; and as my credit in the neighbourhood of Eagle House had been covered by a five-pound note, forwarded by my

mother for the purpose, leaving a large balance of small change in my pocket, I luxuriated in my sense of dignity, unmolested by unseasonable apprehensions of a dun.

"Who on earth can it come from?" I muttered, holding it in my hand as a sacred deposit I was scarcely entitled to appropriate.

"Read, my dear boy, and you will find that it contains no ill news!" said my mother, in an unusually encouraging tone; and a glance at the table beside which we were standing having revealed to me a still larger letter addressed to herself in the self-same hand-writing, in which my own had evidently been enclosed, I saw she was perfectly qualified to save me the trouble of perusal.

"Why not explain the matter at once, mother?" said I, almost peevishly, from fancying myself trifled with;—*me*—"H. W. Powerscourt, ESQUIRE!" But the extraordinary agitation of her features while silently but perseveringly motioning to me to open the letter, prevented my persisting. There were actually tears in her eyes!—Never had I beheld

my frigid, reserved mother so near the verge of an emotion!—

But even after obeying her pantomimic injunctions, and opening and perusing the mysterious missive, I was little wiser than before. Signed by the authority tripartite of a legal firm, "Gripham, Sneak, and Klose," and referring in every line to their "communication to Mrs. Mary Powerscourt, my parent and guardian," the letter contained repeated allusions to my late revered relative, Mr. Francis Wrottesley, of Yorkshire, which were much more Greek to *me* than any thing I had learned at Eagle House. *My* name, indeed, was Wrottesley. But I did not remember to have ever heard of my revered relative, Mr. Francis.

"Do they allude to my godfather?" said I, addressing my mother with a perplexed air. "I remember once asking after whom I was named; and, as you did not seem inclined to answer the question, I concluded it was after some godfather who was dead."

But my mother was no longer able to contain

herself! She was approaching fast towards hysterics; and as the letter of Messrs. Gripham, Sneak, and Klose had announced that my revered relative was a "late" one, I concluded she was crying for his decease.

"I am afraid, mother," said I, "the news contained in this letter has given you pain?"

"Pain?" cried she, or rather, gasped she. "You surely have not read it to the end? Don't you see, my dear Harry, that old Wrottesley has made you his heir?"

"And was my godfather, then, a rich man?"

"Enormously!—No one ever knew exactly what he was worth!—Fifteen or twenty thousand a year, at the least!"—

Twenty thousand a year was, at that period, to me an apocryphal sum; which, like the National Debt, no one who had not worked once or twice through "Walkingham's Tutor's Assistant," could expound without recourse to the numeration table. As some clearance to my density, I fell back upon the letter.

Yes, my mother's announcement was confirmed! Henry Wrottesley Powerscourt, the

godson of the deceased was appointed his sole heir and residuary legatee; and, by the humbleness of phrase in which my most obedient and faithful servants, Messrs. Gripham, Sneak, and Klose, had the honour to tender me their respectful services on the occasion, I saw that my mother had not far miscalculated the value of my inheritance.

If my tears were not quite so abounding as those of the weeping lady, my breath was almost as scanty. It was now *my* turn to sit down and gasp!

The position being favourable for an embrace, my mother tottered towards me and hung over me in tears; an expansion of soul and body in which I did not remember her to have indulged since the extraction of my first tooth. But as she judiciously intermingled with her embraces repeated ejaculations of, "If the poor, dear Colonel could but have lived to see this day!" my heart became as sympathizingly softened as though her fondness were habitual.

"But how came it, mother," said I, as soon as I recovered the use of my parts of speech,

" that you never apprized me of these prospects of fortune?"

" Of what use," she replied, " to foster expectations, which, after all, might never be realized by a man so capricious as old Wrottesley? You might have wasted all your best days in the dangerous occupation of building Castles in the Air!"

Conscious of my weakness in this particular, I gave her credit for more wisdom than was her due; for the truth was that she was as much taken by surprise as myself. After the custom of those who have wealthy and childless relatives, my father had named me after my Yorkshire kinsman; and when, on his death, the widow addressed a letter to the old gentleman, savouring grievously of a narrow income and confidence in his generosity, she received, in reply, such coarse allusions to hers and her husband's extravagant habits, by which their young family were left penniless, that she not only resolved against further communication with the Dives of the family, but forbad all mention of his name. Having ascertained that

the poor Colonel's revered relative Francis Wrottesley, Esquire, was under the dominion of a lady residing under his roof, who did *not* bear the name she had so gratuitously bestowed on her only son, the prudential mother decided that it was not worth while to keep up the connection.

The subsequent demise of the said lady affording no matter for announcement in the Morning Post, had of course remained a secret at Hentsfield; while, on the other hand, the old gentleman's private inquiries, concerning my mother's administration of her family affairs, having brought to light that she was leading a quiet country life, that her husband's debts were paid, and, above all, that her only son, his much-scouted godson, instead of being sent to Eton, was reared at a homely country-school in corduroys and a leather cap of the most approved errand-boy pattern, he determined to bequeath his noble fortune to the one of his collaterals who appeared most likely to double it, ere it was again bequeathed to a successor.

And thus, *de fil en aiguille*, I came into

possession of " from fifteen to twenty thousand a year!" nor had the airy Castles I was likely to form for the future need to present a more auspicious aspect than Wrottesley Hall.

" Would you not like to see your sisters, my dear Harry?" inquired my mother, after exhausting her explanations and caresses—much as people address such an inquiry to those who have undergone some afflicting bereavement or surgical operation.

" I shall meet them at breakfast, mother," said I, not having altogether forgotten the tone in which Dora and Emily responded to my parting salutations the preceding night.

" But we shall not breakfast before an hour; and they are longing to offer you their congratulations!" persisted she. On which, suddenly emerging from an adjoining bed-room, they threw themselves into my arms; and, as I certainly heard no previous turning of the handle or opening of the door, they had, probably, been unsuspected ear-witnesses of the whole preceding interview.

"Was there ever such a stroke of luck, my dear Harry!" cried my elder sister.

"You will be richer than any body in this part of the country!" added the other.

"Mr. Whichcote of Barming, who thinks so much of himself, has but five thousand a year!" observed Dora.

"*Mr. Whichcote!*" reiterated Emily, in a tone of contempt which spoke volumes. And so vehement was the affection suddenly conceived for me by my next of kin, in place of the modest deprecation with which Cinderella's sisters stood aloof on finding the object of their contumely transformed into a princess, that I was afraid I should be smothered with kindness instead of being allowed to prepare for breakfast. And at Christmas, food and raiment are not so easily dispensed with!

I had little leisure, moreover, to waste in compliments. The letter which was exciting such commotion at Hentsfield, required me to repair without loss of time to Wrottesley Hall, situated a few miles from Wakefield; to be

present at the funeral of "my late revered relative," and the examination of his papers and effects by Messrs. Gripham, Sneak, and Klose; solicitors to the deceased, and confirmed in their functions by Sir Robert Hawley, his executor.

For a moment I was inclined to fear that,—the tenderness of my family having risen so much above high-water mark,—they might insist upon accompanying me on the journey.—The weather, however, stood my friend.—Before noon, came on a heavy fall of snow; and, considering the despatch that must be used, and the intensity of the cold, they consented to let me start alone. The truth was, that the family chariot, from which I had been hitherto excluded, was not licensed to carry four inside; and as neither of the young ladies had courage to attempt the rumble, or condemn to it a brother in the enjoyment of between fifteen and twenty thousand a year, for whom it had been hitherto only too good and grand, I escaped having my first independent journey hampered by heavy baggage.

Nicholls, poor old fellow, was to be my sole

companion; and as I placed him in the corner of the chariot, and gave the signal to the post-boys to start for my estates in the north, I doubt whether Napoleon felt half so triumphant on his road to Paris, at the close of his Italian campaign.

Already, I experienced a slight foretaste of the joys of prosperity. In my victimized boyhood, Nicholls had often stood my friend; (for which partiality towards his master's son, and the homeliness of aspect of so aged a servitor, my sisters had worked hard to procure his sentence of superannuation;) and when *he* exclaimed as we bowled along the great North road, at the rate of ten miles an hour—"Oh! Master Harry! if the poor Colonel had but lived to see this blessed day!" I thrust out my hand to requite with a fervent squeeze of his withered fingers the tears which, in *his* eyes, I knew to be disinterested.

My mind was still too confused, or contused by the avalanche of good fortune which had fallen upon me, to understand *very* clearly what further I had to wish for in this world. But I

was not likely to be long in finding out. The sun, now fully risen, was shining upon that vast landscape of life which, hitherto a blank, revealed in all directions the smiling features of its more propitious aspect.

Henceforward, what excuse for building Castles in the Air!—

CHAPTER III.

Dans la plus grande anxiété où j'eusse jamais été, j'ai joui pour la première fois de la conscience de mon être. Forcé d'être quelque chose, je fus enfin moi-même.

SÉNANCOURT.

DISPENSE with a more particular description, dear reader, of the flutter of spirits in which I reached the confines of my new domain.

Sir Robert Hawley, the executor of my late revered relative, being laid up at his adjacent country seat of Hawley Chase by a fit of the gout nearly as severe as that which deprived me of my father, though produced by grief for his departed chum of the last half century instead of calipash and calipee, I was welcomed by the head of the firm of Gripham, Sneak, and Klose; a fussy little man, as well pleased as

myself I suspect at my arriving unaccompanied by the authoress of my days.

Considering my aptitude for Castle-building, it was perhaps only natural that, in the course of my journey, my busy fancy should have created unto itself a Wrottesley Hall, imposing as Burleigh, elegant as Chatsworth, stately as Blenheim, or noble as Belvoir; but for which flight of imagination, I should perhaps have pronounced like all the rest of the world that Wrottesley was one of the finest seats in the West Riding. Falling short, however, of my exorbitant conjectures, I fell out, at first sight, with my new mansion. Unawed by the number of its doors and windows, (which doubled that of the whole village of Hentsfield,) I decided the house to be gloomy without being dignified, and irregular without being picturesque. Old Wrottesley, the most self-indulgent of egotists, having made a practice, whenever he found himself annoyed in winter by a draught of air, of blocking up a door, or window, or even passage or staircase,—there were two suites of

apartments in the western side of the quadrangle, which for the last ten years had been inaccessible!

But however unsightly, the house was spacious enough to be almost appalling. I arrived at night, after nearly two days' journeying; and the occasion of my advent and the uproarious inclemency of the weather were so mournfully in unison, that the vast library, which the servants seemed to think a couple of wax candles sufficient to enlighten at such a gloomy crisis, reminded me strongly of the vault in which I was about to lay the head of my eccentric benefactor.

What I dreaded most was that the consequential solicitor, who at present appeared much more master of the house than myself, might take it into his head to propose a visit to the chamber of death!—I did not yet clearly understand the independence of my position. Accustomed to the severe domination of a cold mother and strict pedagogue, my spirit wore the print of their trammels; though the servility of

the obsequious Gripham might have served to convince me that I was not only my own master, but the master of other people.

I had no difficulty in extracting from him, before I retired for the night, that my mother had not far miscalculated the amount of thousands per annum to which I succeeded; and, what was almost equally to the purpose, that the executor, Sir Robert Hawley, was an infirm yea-nay old gentleman, likely to leave me in undisputed possession of my own way. But there was a point on which, at that moment, I felt scarcely less eager to be enlightened; namely, whether old Wrottesley were closed in his coffin.

There was still so much of the boy in my newly-recognized adolescence, that, if left uncertain as to this contingency, to close my eyes would be impossible; for I had never seen a dead person, and my horror of such a sight was unspeakable.

Up to the last instant, however, I could not muster courage to put the question. I have already mentioned how shy my sisters' railleries

had made me; and in presence of a jack-in-office like Gripham, the extent of whose authority over me was still a matter of surmise, I chose to assume too self-reliant an attitude to betray my foot of clay.

After showing me up a damp, chilly, grand staircase, and preceding me with a single candle along a close and mildewed corridor, the man of business paused near the door of a chamber to which he pointed with a sanctimonious grimace, purporting that it contained the remains of my benefactor; and far from satisfactory was it to discover that the bed-room selected for my use by himself and the housekeeper, opened from the same passage, at a few paces distance. Nay, on entering the room assigned me, its bed and window-hangings of dark velvet, garnished with Venice point, exhibited so lugubrious an appearance, that, in spite of the fire crackling and endeavouring to burn in the grate, I ventured to inquire whether some less stately chamber were not available.

Gripham shook his head.

"I fear, my dear Sir," said he, "that it is

now too late to make other arrangements. The housekeeper and upper housemaid, having sat up last night with the corpse, have long since retired to bed; and this is the only bed-room in the house which is aired or habitable. The physician of your revered relative has slept in it, on and off, for some months past."

"I am not a delicate person," said I, with an almost quivering lip, "or in the slightest degree afraid of a damp bed,—"

But what I *was* afraid of, I still hesitated to inform him.

"My dear Sir, you have not the most remote idea of the state of the case!" was his earnest rejoinder. "For the last eight years—that is ever since the death of Mrs.—ahem!—of a lady who at one time resided here, Mr. Wrottesley has not had a soul staying in his house. The bed-rooms have been kept shuttered up, without air, light, or fire. The chimneys are full of daws' nests—the beds of spiders. It has been the poor old gentleman's pleasure to let every thing go to ruin and confusion. In

proportion as he thought only of himself, he seemed to wish that other people should forget him; and I have little doubt that one of the circumstances which mainly recommended you to his favour was that you neither came near him nor addressed him by letter. Several of his other relations offended him by the officiousness of their correspondence."

"Most likely!" said I, inwardly applauding the touchiness of my mother for having taken affront at his first rebuff. "But still, it strikes me that in this large house—among the servants' apartments, for instance—a room might be found—"

"They are not only totally unfitted to receive you," he replied, "but just now occupied by the undertakers' people. This room probably struck chill on entering, my dear Mr. Powerscourt; but the fire is already burning up, you see, and it will soon be warm and comfortable. Good night Sir, good night!—With your leave, I will send in the morning to inquire how you rested."

"Meanwhile, pray be so good as to send my servant to me as soon as possible!" said I. And with an acquiescing bow, he departed.

While listening to the hollow sound of his footsteps along the arched corridor, how I longed to call him back, and apprize Nicholls he was wanted, by simply ringing the bell! But it required more strength of mind than I possessed to admit that I, who was addressed as Esquire,—I, the master of Wrottesley Hall—I, in my eighteenth year,—was afraid of being left alone.

Soon, however, even the faint echo of Gripham's footsteps was wanting; and I heard nothing but the snow-flakes beating against the lofty windows with a dense dead sound, as though muffled in deference to the house of death; or as if funereal plumes were flapping against the darkened panes.

I listened and listened, till my ears became perplexed by the mysterious murmurs invariably produced by an over intense exercise of the aural powers. When the wood crackled in the fire-place, I fancied that the sound was

emitted by the floor of the passage, and announced approaching footsteps; while the howling of the midnight winds sounded like the voice of the dead, calling mournfully and fitfully upon my name.—Aghast and sinking, my fell of hair rose on end like that of Banquo's murderer, or the dupe of the Witch of Endor.

At length, as many minutes having expired as seemed an hour, and really amounted to nearly a quarter of that time,—unable, longer to bear the sense of my solitary proximity to the dead, I started from the chair into which I had sunk with my hands folded over my eyes, and rang the bell as though the house were on fire.

"I am waiting for my servant," said I, to a frightened-looking clodpole—some trencher-scraper or stable-scrub, who presently made his appearance. "Mr. Gripham promised to send him up."

And what was my horror on learning that sending "up" or down was alike impossible. Poor old Nicholls, being "main poorly after his cold journey," had gone to bed immediately on his arrival, with a request that his excuses might

be tendered to his master! Through *his* interference I had intended to procure a room more pleasantly situated, or to detain him in my own for the night; and when the clodpole, after inquiring whether there was "nou't else I wanted?" departed also, and all I could do to make myself feel more at home, and more distant from the corpse, was to lock and bolt the door, fain would I have resigned the inheritance of Wrottesley, but to have found myself at that moment once more in my own humble room at Hentsfield, with its cheerful white dimity, and green papering, and the chambers of my family within hail; or standing, as I had done two nights before at its window, to await the rising sun.

"If I could only make up my mind to lie down on that catafalque of a bed," thought I, "I might perhaps drop asleep. And I repeated this so often, seated in a huge arm-chair opposite a glowing fire, after a journey of a hundred and eighty miles in frosty weather, that it was a wonder how I contrived to keep open my

eyes. Wild, meanwhile, as the winds howling at my window were my endeavours to trace in the glowing fire visionary structures akin to the aërial castles I was usually so apt in constructing. Still wilder my attempts at self-study. Like some solitary angler beside a still stream, who, while contemplating reflected on the glassy water his own form and lineaments, finds the picture suddenly deformed into concentric circles by an unexpected nibble, my mental starts threw all my reveries into confusion.

At length, while the night gusts and the smoke of the roaring fire were at the hottest of their fight in the grim chimney, the door of the chamber was—I will not say flung open—for there was no violence in the movement, but opened as by an action of its own; and lo! in glided a figure on which I dared not turn to gaze; but which, as it stood in dim silence behind my chair, was reflected in the old Venetian glass with bevilled edges, that overhung the chimney-piece;—a shape rather than a

human being;—being tightly swathed in grave clothes, with even the face concealed from view by a mortuary cloth!—

As the cold dew dropped in agony from my brows, how I trembled lest that cloth should be withdrawn!—The mere idea of the stony eye of the dead fixed in sternness on my face, almost palsied the strong beatings of my heart.

If this object—this thing—should be there to warn me—to rebuke—to apprize the creature of its bounties of some duty to be discharged for its behoof, or error to be avoided—to tell me that it could not rest in its grave unless I restituted to the Chancellor of the Exchequer some amount of evaded taxes, or excise duty bilked!—Still and motionless as old Wrottesley himself should have been, (if at ease in his conscience,) lest I should provoke my ghastly visitant to apostrophize me,—how deeply did I dread the hollow sound of such a voice as must needs issue from those clay-cold lungs!

Had I only deferred my visit to my new territories till the coffin of my late revered relative was fairly soldered up! Were I only at

home at Hentsfield, in the green bed-room with white dimity curtains! Then came the panic-striking conviction that the abhorrence which agitated my mind must be known to the supernatural being I had not courage to turn and confront;—that it might perhaps resent my repugnance;—that it was about to uplift its awful voice to threaten and revile. The hot blood that rose to my throat all but stifled me at the thought!

Another moment, and my fears were more than justified. My hand was seized by one that must have been protruded from under the loathsome grave-clothes; for as it firmly grasped my own, a bolt of ice seemed to shoot through my frame. The voice in which it addressed me, however, instead of being hoarse or harsh, was faint as a woman's treble, and seemed to whisper into the inmost porches of my ear. Blessed, however, was that voice, and the tidings it conveyed! For, the night-mare under which I was labouring rendering me incapable of reply, old Nicholls, not only reiterated in a louder key that it was "eight

of the clock, and that the housemaid waited to light my fire," but knocked so loudly at the door as to rouse me from my uneasy slumbers.

I woke to find myself still seated opposite the dying embers, whose warmth had overcome me; grasping in my hand the polished oaken knob of my old arm-chair!—

While the old man proceeded to open the window shutters, and let in the glare of day-light reflected from a winter's waste of snow, he was luckily too intent upon excusing his own infirmities of the preceding night to take much heed of either the strangeness of my position, or haggardness of my looks.

But even after the fire-place had been replenished and my clothes placed in order for my toilet, I was struck by the sound of a low knocking near at hand, which had penetrated even the heaviness of my sleep.

"Don't pay no attention to it, Master Harry!" said poor Nicholls, when he saw how anxiously I was listening; "I was in hopes 'twould be

over before you were awake. They are only closing up the old gentleman in his coffin!"

The intimation of Messrs. Gripham, Sneak, and Klose, that I had succeeded to Wrottesley Hall and all its appurtenances, had scarcely afforded me greater satisfaction!—

CHAPTER IV.

Your 'scutcheon'd pride
Of blazon'd braggartry—your banners waving
Their storied pomp high in the ambient air,
That laughs such gauds to scorn, how less august
Than some poor osier'd grave-heap,
By love's quotidian sorrow freshen'd green!

MARSTON.

AFTER all, it was only the untimely hour of my arrival which had imparted undue solemnity to the aspect of Wrottesley Hall. On the contrary, nothing could be more quaintly and indecently humourous than the look of the place. My wildest vagaries of castle-building had never figured any thing more comical; and when, under Gripham's guidance, I made the tour of my new premises, it was difficult to turn a deaf ear to the giggling audible on the

backstairs, or the horse-laughter proceeding from the stables.

My late revered relative, it appeared, had expired after a lingering illness of a year's duration; during which, his peevishness had exhausted the patience of his household, as completely as his selfish moroseness had detached the rest of the world; and his death was consequently a release to other sufferers besides himself. Nobody wanted him back again;—especially after beholding the Harry the Fifth about to be crowned in his stead, and learning that the five pounds, free of legacy duty, bequeathed to every servant in the house, was already doubled by my munificence.

But independently of the hilarity of the offices, there was something strangely mirth-moving in the mere ordering of the house. Windows closed up irregularly here and there, gave the rooms the appearance of winking; and the dismatchment of the furniture to meet the old gentleman's caprices,—the substitution of a portrait, daubed at York, of one of his favourite hunters of early years for a Sasso

Ferrato, the pendant to which, a noble Guido, still hung in its place in the yellow drawing-room, while the print of the Durham ox figured as companion to a lovely portrait of the Squire's mother, from the pencil of Sir Joshua—were not more absurdly out of place than the gouty crutches and cradles, and vials of ginger-seeds and white mustard, intermingled with vases of old Chelsea and tazzas of *giallo-antico.*

A dog's basket had possession of a rich damask *fauteuil;* and in a beautiful octagon vestibule, paved with tesselated marble, and containing eight exquisite antique statues, niched into the walls, a filthy jay maintained its privilege of domicile,—too tame for a cage, and defiling the polished pavement with its scattered food.

"Poor Mr. Wrottesley appears to have been an eccentric personage?" said I to my companion, reassured in my criticism by the ominous noise which had greeted me at dawn of day.

"Very!" was the terse reply. "When people so opulent as my late client, take it

into their heads to defy the world, and live *for* themselves and *to* themselves, a tinge of natural oddity, or mere originality of humour, soon ripens into crazy perversity. Mr. Wrottesley listened to nothing but the suggestions of his whims; and you may think yourself lucky, my dear Sir, that he did not survive a few years longer; when his eccentricities might have exceeded the limits assigned by the law to human vagaries. Some time hence, perhaps, his heir-at-law, (whoever he may be), might have found pretext for setting aside his will."

"But as it is, you do not think it possible?" said I, a little troubled:—my partial survey of the fine old mansion having already put me into wonderful conceit with my new possessions.

"An action to that effect would scarcely lie. Strong evidence could be afforded that, to the last, Mr. Wrottesley had one of the best business-heads in the county of York; as, at some future moment, my dear Sir, his private accounts will convince you. He sold an un-

sound horse only last week to his friend Sir Robert Hawley, to whom he has left a legacy of two thousand pounds!"

This proof of the lucidity of intellect of my late revered relative, suggested in Yorkshire by a Yorkshireman, I did not pretend to dispute. But I felt the less surprised, on reaching the library, to find the books safely locked within their wiry cages, (though the jay was *not*), and covered with a thick coating of mildew. Accustomed to the well-thumbed and hand-polished classics of Eagle House, the venerable folios of Thucydides and Herodotus before me, each resembling in complexion a Stilton cheese, afforded confirmation strong of the surmises I was beginning to form concerning my godfather.

My exclamations, I conclude, were puerile enough. For I had wit enough to discover that Gripham, who had at first welcomed me as a man, was beginning to treat me so like a boy that I began to regard *him* as a beast. I foresaw that I should have to keep the fellow at a distance; and as a means of creating a

chevaux de frise betwixt me and the attorney, hastened to propose a visit to Sir Robert Hawley.

"Since the Manor lay at so short a distance, I wished to pay my respects to Mr. Wrottesley's friend and executor."

Gripham instantly objected.

"It would be a violation of custom," he said, "for me to appear abroad previous to the funeral."

In that jay-cherishing, window-suppressing house, however, an appeal to custom appeared out of place; and the more strenuous the reasons urged against the visit, the more I determined to persevere.

"If the frost rendered the road dangerous for horse or carriage, I would walk."

Of my own legs, Gripham could hardly grudge me the mastership; but he stated, with many apologies, the impossibility of his accompanying me to present me to the Baronet; having urgent business at his office, which would detain him at Wakefield till dinner-time. Even *this* announcement, however, did not effect the

anticipated discouragement. Without another word, I rang the bell.

"Let one of my people be in readiness," said I to the clodpole of the preceding night, who answered it, "to show me the way to Hawley Chase."

This announcement *à la Louis XIV.*, that "*l'état c'est moi*," fully answered my expectations. Finding me determined to go, the wily attorney found it suddenly possible to bear me company. But I would not hear of it. Since he had chosen to have business at Wakefield, *I* chose that his business should be executed; and shook him off as resolutely as shortly afterwards I shook the snow from my feet, while ascending the door-steps at Hawley Chase.

The invalid—for ill he really was—was cowering over a fire in his dressing-room; but as I caused myself to be announced as "Mr. *Wrottesley* Powerscourt," he had not the heart to refuse an audience to the namesake of his old friend.

Though for some minutes sorely distressed

at seeing me, no sooner did he ascertain that instead of the swaggering young gentleman he had been expecting, intoxicated by an unanticipated accession of fortune, I was only a shy boy sadly in fear of bit and bridle, than he seemed to appreciate the frankness of my proceeding in coming straight to his house, and placing myself under his authority.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Powerscourt," said he, as soon as he could command his voice. "My poor friend Wrottesley would perhaps have done better had he chosen for you a more efficient guardian than a man of my years and infirmities. But he could not have selected one more desirous to see his heir do honour to his name."

Sir Robert spoke graciously, and what was better, kindly. His manners and establishment were so much those of a high-bred old gentleman, that nothing but the cart-rope bond of country-neighbourship could account for his intimacy with a petter of jays, and waller-up of windows. They inspired me, indeed, with so much confidence in his judg-

ment, that I asked his advice at once concerning the exercise of my authority at Wrottesley Hall.

He answered me promptly;—and how I love a man who answers promptly,—not from precipitation, but because his general principles are so strong and comprehensive that his mind is readily made up!—

"Gripham's house of business is highly respectable," said he; "but neither he nor his partners belong to a class of society to render desirable his control over your personal conduct. They must be made at once to understand that their mission is simply one of pounds, shillings, and pence."

The next question regarded what was to become of me till I came of age. Sir Robert, a man of the old school, insisted on the necessity of a University education; and when I slightly hinted a preference for completing my studies on the continent, under the care of a travelling tutor, reminded me so stiffly of the probability of my succeeding him as the future representative of the neighbouring borough,

and of the indispensability of a classical education to complete the standard accomplishments of an English gentleman, that I sat rebuked.

After all, as it was clear that, between his guardianship and my mother's, I could not attain perfect liberty of action till I was twenty-one, I should probably become more my own master at Cambridge, than elsewhere.

"Meanwhile, my dear Mr. Powerscourt," he resumed, "the surplus of your income will be laying by, to achieve what you must have already perceived to be highly necessary—the repairing and remodelling of Wrottesley Hall. Three thousand a-year is the sum assigned by my late friend for your maintenance during your minority. But as no instructions are given by the will for the disposal of the residue, it must of course accumulate,—subtracting only what is essential to the maintenance of the estate. For two years to come, therefore, I recommend you to shut up the house, and content yourself with making it weather-tight. In the third, your university career will be completed; and if still in the land of the living,

I will do my best in assisting you to devote the closing months of your minority to making your family seat all that is likely to tempt you to settle there for life."

Sir Robert's proviso about being still in the land of the living, was a wise one! So frequently was this long exposition of his views interrupted by twinges of the gout, and a short, dry cough, that, anxious as I was to get at the root of the opinions and intentions destined to govern my comfort, I sincerely wished the old gentleman's constitution in better case.

"I shall see you again, I hope," he resumed, "after the melancholy ceremony in which you are about to officiate?" An inquiry denoting that he did not intend the communication between us to be of a *very* close and intimate nature. "Before you quit Yorkshire," added he, "I strongly recommend you to place your establishment on the footing you wish it to retain till the accomplishment of your majority, as well as to see the inventories essential for

the estimate of your legacy-duty properly made out."

An augmentation of the old gentleman's pthisicky interruptions, satisfied me that he had by this time as much talking as he wanted; and, sorely against my will, I took leave. There was nothing very inviting in either Wrottesley or Gripham to hasten my return.

On re-entering the house—*my* house,—I took care, however, to maintain the step I had made in the establishment of my independence, by assuming a degree of ceremonious politeness towards the attorney during dinner, such as made him fully understand that it was only my want of choice on the subject, that placed us at table together. By my encomiums of Sir Robert Hawley, as a polite and kind old man, disposed in every way to promote my welfare, I rebutted all attempts at encroachment on my confidence.

In the course of the day, moreover, I had installed myself in a suite of pleasant chambers

facing the south, on the ground-floor, the window-shutters of which were knocked open, the chimneys cleared, and blazing fires lighted on every hearth; while the room adjoining my own, was appropriated to the use of Nicholls. A trying thing it was to issue on the morrow from this comfortable snuggery, on a snowy winter morning, bedizened with streamers of crape, and cased in a superfine suit of sables, got up in haste by a Wakefield snip, surrounded by strange and inauspicious faces; to do the honours of a hearse and six amid the scuffling of undertaker's men, and the scampering of an escort of yeomanry cavalry.

A sorrowful heart was not to be expected of me: for what possible good did I know of old Wrottesley, except that he had made me his heir? But I should probably have experienced the awe created in every youthful heart by close contact with the pomps of death, had not the officious consequentiality of Gripham converted my feelings of deference into bitterness. The impertinent air of superiority with which he affected to marshal me in my

duties of the day, and introduce me to the half dozen gentlemen of the neighbourhood, who exhibited their respect for the extent of the Wrottesley estate by attending the funeral, provoked me into a mood wholly incompatible with the humilities of a mourning coach.

"I do not wonder," thought I, on the subsiding of those better feelings engendered by listening to the most beautiful of the services of our church, and seeing the dust of a fellow mortal consigned to darkness and the worm, "I do not wonder my poor old benefactor became, in his latter days, such a breathing tornado. Such a fussy, vulgar dog as Gripham, perpetually yelping about one, might make a tyrant of Job!"

These sentiments were probably pictured in my face; for the man of business chose to make his importance manifest by proceeding to his own house from the church-door, to dine and sleep; aware of being for the present so necessary an evil at Wrottesley Hall, that I could better spare a better man. Though my panic of strangeness was at an end, and, by dint of

light and warmth, I had contrived to make my portion in the old house as cheerful as Hentsfield, I stood too much in need of information touching every thing and every body around me, not to be eager for companionship. Mr. Wrottesley's servants were of an inferior order, and could not be questioned with comfort; and I am free to admit that when, on the morrow, it was announced to me that Messrs. Gripham and Sneak and one of their clerks, awaited my pleasure, for the purpose of opening the bureaux of the deceased, and placing seals upon the plate chests, I was heartily rejoiced to hear of their arrival.

Before you condemn my inconsistency, dear reader, you must have woke up in a rambling, old country house, requiring a numerous family and proportionate household to render it, even under the most extenuating circumstances, tolerably cheerful; but which, with a deep snow upon the ground, a scanty establishment, and closed-up shutters, might have thrown the dreariness of a Carthusian monastery into the shade.

But Gripham chose to re-pay me in my own coin. It had been my pleasure to reduce him into the solicitor of the estate, and the solicitor of the estate he saw fit to remain. Having set himself and his companions to work, they were soon up to their ears in business; and to attempt any one of the idle questions I premeditated, would have been as out of place as to perpetrate a pun in a lazaretto.

While watching the crab-like progress of the schedules, for the chance of an opportunity to inquire whose was the handsome stone mansion house I had noticed as within visiting distance, on my way back from Hawley Chase, Clodpole came and whispered in my ear; and from the air of chagrin with which Gripham followed my movements as I instantly hurried out of the room, I saw that he had overheard the announcement of a visit from Sir Gratian Roxborough, one of the gentlemen to whom I had been presented the preceding day.

"The stone mansion-house for a thousand!" thought I. And the stone mansion-house it was.

But on entering the apartment hastily converted into a breakfast room for my use, I found I had more visitors than one. Dr. Temple, the clergyman of the parish, by whose discreet discharge of his solemn duty I had been so prepossessed, was seated at some distance from the fire; on the hearth-rug before which, Sir Gratian, still encumbered by a great coat and comforter sprinkled with snow, (which the parson had been civil enough to leave in the hall,) stood Colossus-wise, as if monarch of all he surveyed.

"Confounded weather this, Mr. Pow'sc'ut!" cried the Baronet, after a rough shake of the hand. "But though the road's as slippy as glass, I wouldn't let the day go by without welcoming you into the county."

And by a grave but gracious bow, Dr. Temple seemed to say "ditto" to Sir Gratian.

"Doleful times for you, young gentleman!" continued the Baronet, glancing at my black coat. "But now old Wrottesley's fairly under ground, no further need, surely, of moping yourself up in this old ghost-hole? Why 'twill

require a month's fumigation to make it fit for Christian habitation! I've seen the rats coursing in the great hall, o' nights, as thick as in e'er a one of my barns."

"A few sharp terriers turned into the house, Sir," said I, "will soon remedy the evil!"

"Ay, by Jove! and afford better sport than a badger hunt!" added Sir Gratian, from whose rough coat the snow, melted by the fire, was beginning to drip copiously on the hearth-rug. "But till the place is brushed up a bit, and the scare-crows of undertakers' men and lawyers' clerks are smoked out of the premises, better come and take up your quarters with *us* at Roxborough Elms."

"*My* errand here, Mr. Powerscourt, is to make a similar request," added Dr. Temple, in a voice somewhat different from the Baronet's croaking bass.

"For as your nearest neighbour," interrupted Sir Gratian, (who, though the parsonage was situated within half a mile of the Hall, evidently did not consider it included in the category of gentlemen's residences,) "I wish you to

understand that, whenever you're out of sorts with Wrottesley Hall, you've a second home at the Elms."

I professed myself as grateful as so liberal a measure of hospitality required:—a little disappointed not to find it echoed by the Doctor, whose benignant countenance already bespoke my regard.

"To tell you the truth, my young friend, we're in a hurry to make up for lost time," resumed Sir Gratian. "Old Wrottesley, though a true gentleman in the main, was such a queer fish to deal with, that he was as bad as no neighbour at all. Nothing less would suit him than to be treated like a crowned head; to make *us* dine with *him* whenever it suited him, without darkening our doors in return! When he found *that* system of things, forsooth, didn't suit my book, he took huff, and at last would not visit on any terms."

"Mr. Wrottesley appears to have been so great an invalid—" I was beginning.

"No, by Jove! *that* couldn't be the cause of it!" interrupted Sir Gratian. "For long

after he'd ceased to enter every other house in the neighb'rhood, he'd go and take his mutton with his brother croaker, old Hawley,—or even pot-luck with the Doctor here; and when the humour was on him, be as blithe and chir'ping as a cricket!"

"It is more than a year, however," observed Dr. Temple, "since Mr. Wrottesley dined in my house; and then, I saw clearly it was for the last time. He was sadly broken."

"And who wouldn't be broken, living the life he did—smothered in flannels and physic bottles?" exclaimed Sir Gratian. "However, as there's no blood relationship betwixt you, to make it seemly for you to keep house, Mr. Pow'sc't," he continued, advancing a step or two nearer to my chair; "for once the proverb must give way, and the young cock crow another tune than the old. We've set our hearts, at the Elms, on having you dine and sleep there this very night! If you're wanted here to-morrow by the black coats, easy enough to ride over for an hour or two, and return to us after they've shut up shop."

I desired nothing better. The words "all of us" afforded promise of metal more attractive than Sir Gratian; and though I affected to hesitate, or rather though from shyness and awkwardness I hesitated, my intentions were I suppose pretty evident; for Dr. Temple observed:

"In that case, I will content myself with assuring Mr. Powerscourt that whenever better engagements are wanting, the door of the Parsonage stands open."

In return, I said all that could be expected; adding that, but for the pleasure of Dr. Temple's visit, I had intended to walk over in the course of the afternoon, "as soon as my lawyers had done with me," and thank him for his officiation in the sad solemnity of the preceding day.

"Your lawyers done with you? What! the cormorants at work already, eh?"—cried Sir Gratian, disregarding every thing but what interested his personal convenience. "Nay, if you've got Gripham and Co. in the house, I suppose I may whistle for the accomplishment

of my wish—that you should walk back with me to the Elms, and send over your man and things, to dress."

"If you will give me leave, Sir," said I, "I will profit by your hospitable offer at a later hour; having a question or two to settle with Mr. Gripham before he leaves the house."

"Then faith I'll push on at once, and let the girls know they may expect you!"—cried my free-and-easy neighbour, bestowing a careless nod on Dr. Temple, and another rough shake of the hand on myself.

I was not sorry to find that, though he went, the Doctor stayed. He proposed indeed to leave me to my engagements; but I assured him he would grant me a great favour in his company till I was called away. With all my wrong-headedness, I fully comprehended the importance to my future comfort of maintaining a friendly footing with the Rector of my parish.

"A cordial neighbourly man, apparently," said I, as soon as Sir Gratian had quitted the room.

"Hospitable indeed, as becomes the repre-

sentative of one of the most ancient landed properties in Yorkshire," responded the Rector; but it was uttered in a tone confirming my previous surmise, that all was not upon velvet between the Rectory and the stone mansion-house.

"Stranger as I am in the county," I resumed, "I consider myself most fortunate in finding three near neighbours so kindly disposed towards me."

And finding that my guest did not choose to appropriate to himself by a bow of acknowledgment his legitimate third of the compliment, I added, more explicitly,

"Yourself, Sir Gratian Roxborough,—and the late Mr. Wrottesley's executor, Sir Robert Hawley—"

"I was not aware," observed the Doctor, "that the health of Sir Robert had enabled him to grant you an interview. The loss of his old friend Wrottesley, supervening on his family misfortunes—"

"His family misfortunes?" I exclaimed, having hitherto attributed the black liveries and

gloomy faces at Hawley Chase to the decease of his friend.

"A few months only have elapsed," resumed Dr. Temple, "since the loss of his only grandson. With his son, the young man's father, he was through life on uneasy terms; and now, he has survived them both!"

"Poor old man!" said I, with genuine sympathy.

"Poor, indeed! For in his childless and heirless old age," resumed Dr. Temple, "he is beginning to be as much tormented by his collaterals as his old friend Wrottesley before him. Let us hope he may be equally wise," added he, in a conciliating tone, "in setting them at defiance."

"I can hardly understand," cried I, "how elderly persons, so circumstanced, have the self-denial to refuse themselves in their lifetime the spectacle of the gratitude likely to wait on their benefactions."

"As we advance in years," rejoined the Rector, "the current of our blood is apt to flow more

sluggishly than at your ardent age. Many people, however, are of your opinion as regards Sir Robert. For his grandson, though childless, left a young and interesting widow with strong claims upon the kindness of Hawley Chase."

Unluckily for the promptings of my curiosity, my presence was at that moment demanded by Gripham, to officiate as witness when he received the double keys of the plate-closet from the steward, and affixed the seal of the executor to the door.

The ceremonies of the day thus concluded, before starting for the Elms, I indited a deliberately-hurried letter to my mother, apprizing her that she "must not expect me back at Hentsfield for a week or two—as I had made engagements to visit Sir Gratian Roxborough, and other friends and neighbours of my late revered relative, Mr. Wrottesley."

I chose her to understand *not* alone that it was out of the question for her and my sisters to join me at the Hall; but that "the awkwardest of created beings," who in his washed-out nankeens and outgrown jacket, had been *mis*

à l'index by his own flesh and blood, was already, in his suit of sables, a man of mark—a stranger within the gates of strange Baronets, and no longer to be beckoned hither and thither at the caprice of self-sufficient misses.

As cognizant as Samson of old wherein my strength abided, I based my notions of self-consequence, and the projects to which they were giving rise on my rent-roll rather than my inches. But already, I was beginning to amplify beyond all reason the importance of £15,000 a year. Untaught by the buffetings of a public school, and measuring my present condition from the humble level of Eagle House, I assigned unnatural proportions to my new Castles in the Air. Nor, had my entrance into the stone mansion-house been preceded, like that of the Duke of Wellington into the Freemason's Tavern, by the flourish of a brass band, and "See the conquering hero comes," could I have been more convinced of my irresistibility!—

I had already ascertained that Sir Gratian was the father of fair daughters; and who, as

well read as myself in the Minerva press could doubt but that he was bent on becoming the father of a rich son-in-law?—

But if a match for either of the Miss Roxboroughs, I was prepared to prove myself doubly a match for their papa!—

CHAPTER V.

Look in what fantastic showers
The snow flings down its feather'd flowers:
Such days, when friends are met together,
Are worth a score of summer weather.
Hark! the merry bells awake,
Clamouring blithely for our sake;
The clock is sounding from the tower,
Four, five, six,—the dinner hour!
Come on! behold the table spread,
Behold—the claret, rosy red.

CORNWALL.

ILL-FATED Caroline Roxborough! When I forget thee, may my gray goosequill forget its cunning!

Yet there was little enough in her mode of welcoming me to the Elms to conciliate my good will. The glance exchanged between her and her younger sister, Caroline, when I made my

appearance—a certain screwing of the mouth and elevation of the eyebrows implying plainer than words "We expected sweet Anne Page, and behold a lubberly post-master's boy!"—let me into the secret of their disappointment that the heir of "poor, dear Wrottesley Hall" (as they had no scruple in calling it) should turn out an unpolished schoolboy.

So long as they could remember, Wrottesley had been a sort of Paradise Lost in the neighbourhood. Having seen the place only under a thick coating of snow, I had no means of appreciating the beauties which excited so much enthusiasm in the young ladies who discerned none in myself; but by their account, the vistas of the park were glorious—the old oaks of secular grandeur; and as the house, however dilapidated, had lost nothing of its stately dimensions, the neighbours had set down the future heir their debtor for the long arrear of dinners, balls, and archery-meetings which had been accumulating for twenty years past.

The Roxborough girls probably saw little in my "complement extern" that promised an immediate discharge of the debt; for they continued to talk of "poor, dear Wrottesley" in my presence, not only as if foreseeing little chance that Paradise Lost would become Paradise Regained in my hands, but as though it were more their property than mine.

When, on advancing at her father's instigation to offer my arm to Caroline to lead her to the dining-room, I entangled my foot in the fringe of the hearth-rug, Adela made no attempt to conceal her ill-bred mirth; and on my stammering an inquiry, as I took my place beside her at table, as to the pleasantness of the neighbourhood, she replied by an abrupt exclamation of, "You will most likely pronounce it the most disagreeable in England!"

"Dr. Temple, however, assured me," I ventured to remonstrate, "that I should find it cheerful and sociable."

"Dr. Temple is qualified to make any place of residence cheerful," retorted the young lady;

"and without suspecting that it derives its cheerfulness from himself."

And all the time her father was occupied in carving and praising the fish of his own ponds, and flesh and fowl of his own fields, the two girls vied with each other in snubbing me so unmercifully, that I had a hard time of it. A sort of unpolished bluntness seemed to prevail in the family, who, never having visited London, eschewed the superficial graces of life, not from a contempt of their flimsiness, but mere ignorance of their existence. When they rode, the merit of their horses, not the cut of their habits, occupied their attention:—extreme humility, or excessive pride, rendering them indifferent to the award of the bystanders.

Their plain-spoken roughness, meanwhile, reduced me to the same state of forlorn embarrassment as the more polished raillery of my sisters. Never had I felt myself so thoroughly a bumpkin;—and never more ambitious of self-possession!

For they were amazingly pretty. Both!

Adela possessed the sort of face which, once looked upon, haunts one for years: arch eyes, of a colour that was neither black, grey, nor hazel, but of mottled green and brown, surmounted by eyebrows full of movement and expression, though formed by a scarcely perceptible line. Her nose, of the Roxalana order, was of the same ivory texture as her whole face; and through her parted lips, as red as haw-berries, the white teeth were slightly visible. Such hair as hers, had it belonged to any other girl, would have been an ornament in itself. But it was never where it ought to be. A curl was always over her face, or a braid down her back; for such was her buoyancy and carelessness of nature, that she was always untidy, like a person hurried out of a bath, who has not found time to finish dressing.

Still, it would have been difficult to find a more piquant countenance, or lovely form. Free from all restraint or aid of art, it was not in the power of the winds of Heaven to visit *her* face too roughly!—

Caroline was shorter and fairer. Though cheerful, *her* vivacity did not reach the mark of indiscretion; and the changes of her mutable complexion denoted her variations of feeling, as faithfully as the speaking eyebrows of Adela. Less robust, she had been less the companion of a father ill calculated to become the preceptor of daughters.

My insight into their several characters was, of course, progressive; being far too much discomfited by the laughing devil, ever on the watch for my clumsinesses in the arch eyes of the elder sister to know more of the Miss Roxboroughs, on retiring that night to dream of them till morning, than that they wore white muslin dresses, and in spite of old Wrottesley's will and testament, held me as cheap as though I were still the penniless gawky of Eagle House. Nay, though there was a depth of snow upon the ground calculated to determine the most restless rambler to keep house, I resolved to make the best of my way home before my patience was worn out.

"On the wing already?" cried Sir Gratian,

when I announced my intentions. "Found out, I suppose, that old Wrottesley's Port and Madeira are twenty years older than mine?—Or, maybe, my madcap daughters have frightened you away?"

"I assure you, dear papa," interrupted Adela, not allowing me time to answer, "we have done our utmost to prevail on Mr. Powerscourt to stay!"

A jade!—she knew I dared not denounce to her father the thousand manœuvres by which she and her sister had endeavoured to render me uncomfortable!

"It is with great regret," said I, as priggishly and consequentially as became an Esquire, eighteen years of age, "that I find myself forced to curtail my visit;" (and a glance at my two tormentors showed me that they were growing a little uneasy!) "But it would ill become me to slight the invitation made me yesterday by Dr. Temple."

"Ill become you to slight a fiddlestick!" was Sir Gratian's coarse rejoinder. "If a humdrum parsonage dinner with old Temple be all the

business that calls you away,—(barley broth, a beef-steak pudding, and cribbage!)—let me tell you, you're a plaguy deal better off at the Elms. Where's the obligation of the case, pray, except to do the thing you like best? No, no! my lad! Begin by showing people you're your own master, or, I promise you, you'll never make yourself *theirs*."

"I have no positive *engagement*, Sir, to Dr. Temple," said I, fancying I was plucking up a spirit.

"Then even let the Doctor keep!" cried Sir Gratian, apparently much relieved. "Lay him by for a rainy day."

"But why should he not be equally available for a snowy one, papa?" interrupted Adela, with a glance at the white expanse of the park, on which heavy flakes were again beginning to fall.

"Besides, in such weather as this, a move of any kind is out of the question," resumed her father, disregarding her. "Instead of holding yourself accountable to such a scrub-shoe as Gripham, send him over a bit of a note by my

groom, telling him that whenever you're wanted, he knows where to find you."

I was about to assert the necessity of my personal appearance for a few hours at the Hall, —chiefly to escape a long morning with those mischievous girls; when, chancing to look in the opposite glass, I saw as clearly as I had beheld the spectre reflected in my dream, Adela Roxborough and her sister engaged in a pantomime behind my back, mutually indicative of earnest hopes that I should persist in my project of departure. And so,—*I stayed.*

By this time, my wrath waxed as hot as sometimes at Hentsfield, when jockeyed by my sisters out of a pleasant party. I had in fact been reared into a permanent *guignon* against the sex! A perpetual sense of aggression had converted me, not into a woman-hater, but a woman-spiter.

I not only stayed, therefore, but, when Sir Gratian, armed with snow-boots and the weather-proof buffalo-skin of a Yorkshire country-gentleman, insisted on my accompanying him towards the lake in his park, to look

for wild-fowl, pleaded thin boots and a cold; and with an obstinacy worthy the provocations in which it had its rise, established myself in the morning-room occupied by and appropriated to the young ladies.

They would probably have sought refuge elsewhere; but that, seldom troubled with guests so refractorily intrusive, their books, work-boxes, desks, and piano were all in the sanctum I was profaning.

"Can you play at billiards, Mr. Powerscourt?" cried Adela, after impatiently indulging in the devil's tattoo (with the prettiest little foot in the world) for several minutes in silence. But on receiving an affirmative for which she was unprepared, she seemed suddenly to forget there was a billiard table on the opposite side of the hall.

To shew how little I was disappointed, I took up a number of "*La Belle Assemblée*," (then a fashionable periodical among colonial and provincial readers,) and pretended to be engrossed by its milk and water pages.

"Suppose, Car, we were to practise a little,"

said she, with the desperate look with which women propose "a little music," when bent upon driving the men out of the room.

And down she sat to the piano;—*not* on harmonious thoughts intent,—but to rattle duets with her sister—"The Battle of Prague" and Steibelt's "Storm!"—every thing that was dissonant and distracting.

"Those pieces possess a peculiar charm for *me*," said I, with malice prepense. "They remind me of the days of my childhood, when my sisters were little girls, learning music with their governess."

Both started from the piano as if touched home by the sarcasm; and in the course of the next ten minutes, I found myself benefited by the attack. Girls are less apt to quiz a man who has sisters of his own. They look upon him as one of the initiated, and are afraid of retaliation.

"There are young ladies, then, in your family, Mr. Powerscourt?" said Adela, taking up her work, and quietly assuming a place at no great distance from me, in an arm-chair.

"Why did you not tell us so at first? In this remote part of the country, we understand the value of such an acquisition to society. How old are they?"

"As they may sooner or later visit this neighbourhood, it would scarcely be fair to tell," said I, overjoyed to find the lioness suddenly tamed.

"Old maids then!" she exclaimed. "No other woman is at the trouble of concealing her age."

"They are not *children*, Miss Roxborough," said I. "They have been some time in the world: long enough, indeed, to have learned the grand secret of the value of good manners. Still, I will not call them old, since they are but two or three years your senior."

"Why, how do you know our ages?" demanded Adela, a little piqued.

"By the pains you take to make me feel myself a boy, who am a year older than you are!" was my biting reply.

"I see you have profited by papa's lesson to you—to make yourself other people's master

by proving that you are your own," retorted Adela, with a better humoured laugh than I expected. "But instead of whetting our wits against each other, suppose you afford us a rational account of the Miss Powers-courts. — Are they pretty — clever—accomplished—agreeable?"

"Handsome, and consequently not pretty," said I, still labouring to throw off the imputation of cubbishness, which I knew I deserved; "and they would perhaps be more agreeable, if less accomplished. It requires miracles of beauty to obtain absolution for the 'Battle of Prague!' But I need not insist *very* largely on their merits or demerits," said I, perceiving that the girls looked as crest-fallen and surprised as the wanton Margaritta of 'Rule a Wife and have a Wife,' at the sudden *sortie* of Leon; "for as I shall not reside at Wrottesley for the next three years, Dora and Emily will, by that time, have homes of their own."

"Not reside at Wrottesley for the next three years!" exclaimed Adela, letting fall her work

into her lap, and the expression of her wicked eye showing her to be at once relieved and disappointed.—"Why, what are you to do with yourself in the interval?"

"To be licked into shape!" said I, repeating an expression I had overheard her whisper to her father the day before, a few minutes after my arrival, when Sir Gratian inquired what she thought of me. "I shall be at Cambridge till the attainment of my majority."

"So that, after all, dear Car," said Miss Roxborough, addressing her sister, "the old place will remain as much 'Paradise Lost' as ever! We reckoned, you see, without our host."

"Say rather, without your guest," I retorted. "But when he returns to Yorkshire, to settle at Wrottesley for good—"

"There shall be a bonfire at Roxborough Elms, whose blaze shall be seen for thirty miles round!" cried Sir Gratian, who, having entered the room unobserved, had overheard our last few sentences. "But how have you been using him, girls? What have you been doing

to give my young friend such a spice of Yorkshire as will tempt him back to it again?" added he.

And as they had no good account to render of themselves, and I was still too nettled by their malice to assist them out of the scrape, the jolly old Baronet set them down again to the piano.

The music in which his soul delighted being, luckily, of a less tumultuous nature than that they had inflicted upon me, they now sang some simple Scotch ballads, and a few old-fashioned duets of Arne's, with much taste and feeling. It was as provoking as it was inexplicable that these two pretty, merry, sweet-voiced girls should be so bent on converting me into an enemy!—

Before dinner was over, however, they humanized a little. After toasting Church and King with Sir Gratian, I announced so positively my intention to return and finish my business at Wrottesley the following day, ("because next morning I was to start for the south,") that they probably blushed to have

afforded me so poor an impression of the courtesies of the county.

In the course of the evening, I was permitted to establish myself sociably beside their work-table.

"You must come again next summer, and have a look at your new place when the leaves are on the trees, Mr. Powerscourt," said Adela.

"And pray bring your sisters with you," added Caroline. "Having now made acquaintance, our next step, I hope, will be to make friends."

But I was not to be cajoled by a few civil words. I was not such a *serin* as to sing for a lump of sugar. After assuring them that I left my sisters at liberty to choose acquaintance and friends for themselves, I hurried to the billiard-room in search of Sir Gratian, who, thanks to the frosty weather and heady port—to say nothing of a glass of ale with his Stilton such as might have made a teetotum of the head of Professor Whewell—was somewhat hazy. He submitted, however, to be roused up from

the pretended perusal of the "York Courant," over which he had fallen asleep; and be beaten for the remainder of the evening by a tyro possessing so many hundreds of acres contiguous to his own.

Next morning, I was off before breakfast, leaving my written adieux. "Letters of business," or some such piece of stereotyped humbug, "called me away."

I cannot but admit, however, that cheerless as Wrottesley appeared when I quitted it, it seemed all the duller for having left behind me the jovial familiarity of Sir Gratian, and the sweet faces attached to his uncouth figure, like Ariel to Prospero's.

Gripham seemed surprised to see me back so soon. But he was doing his duty in my absence. I found him and his myrmidons busily at work. As my confidence was not to be had on easier terms, he appeared determined to earn it.

He was, perhaps, as much aggrieved by my unexpected *hauteur*, as I by the sarcastic affability of the Miss Roxboroughs. However

cringingly the neighbourhood might be prepared to welcome the heir of Wrottesley Hall, Gripham, who had recently held in his hands that unlucky old letter from my mother, appealing to the kindness of her husband's wealthy relative in the early and more distressed portion of her widowhood; Gripham, who knew me for what I was, and as the drawer-up of my godfather's will, was witness to his vacillations of mind in the selection of an heir, had some pretext for resenting my sudden assumption of consequence.

But what had I to fear from his resentment? All the king's horses and all the king's men, could not rend asunder the parchments constituting me autocrat of Wrottesley and its territories!—

"I so little expected you home yesterday, Sir," said he, on my referring to the message I had despatched from the Elms, "that, judging you would be in haste to return to your family, (since the state of the country affords small temptation to remain in this cheerless house), I profited by your absence to proceed

to Hawley Chase and draw up, under Sir Robert's directions, a statement of his views and intentions, as they were modified in your recent interview. To avoid any future misunderstanding, you should know what you have to count upon."

I tried to look as if I thought Sir Robert ought to have communicated his intentions in person; and that *his* word would have sufficed me. But this did not prevent Gripham from proceeding to recite aloud, with legal circumstantiality, a manifesto, the tediousness of which the reader may be spared; purporting that I was to enjoy an allowance of three thousand per annum, paid quarterly in advance, with a gratuity of a thousand guineas by way of outfit; the house and establishment at Wrottesley to be kept up on an economical footing; and, in due time, steps to be taken for the restoration of the place.

Gripham took such especial care to inform me, by the by, that the sum destined for the purchase of equipages, horses, and dressing-boxes was vouchsafed at *his* suggestion, that

I could not but feel a little ashamed of my previous ungraciousness. After all, he might not be a pettifogger. After all, in spite of the Minerva Press, there might possibly exist one honest lawyer. For how was my inexperience to conjecture how much it was his interest to inoculate me with expensive tastes, by supplying the means of obtaining credit, (a shadow for which substance must be pre-existent); or that his surest chance of converting me into his most obedient humble servant, was by starting me in perfect independence?—

CHAPTER VI.

Lors même que, fasciné par de gracieuses lueurs, on se flatte d'avoir réalisé une portion de son rêve et qu'on s'abandonne à en jouir, le côté des amours-propres se fait bientôt jour, et corrompt les douceurs les mieux appêtées. De toutes les affections subtiles, il sort inévitablement quelque chose d'amer.

SAINTE BEUVE.

If of anti-didactic frame of mind, dear reader, be pleased to turn the leaf, and skip to the following page:—the concluding phrase of the foregoing chapter having thrown me into a fit of musing, out of which my mind must work its way, through a fog of doubts and misgivings, to its wonted lucidity.

Even aided by my present greyness of beard, and squareness of toes, I confess I have never satisfied my conscience touching the age at which

it behoves parents and guardians to inaugurate their charge into that vitiating science called knowledge of the world:—or whether at all! As regards myself, were my life to begin again, rather would I have to struggle through every degree of dupehood, leaving a portion of my fleece on all the brambles of this briary world, than have my illusions prematurely destroyed.

Such glorious things as they are, those illusions of youth,—stars upon the firmament, blossoms upon the bough!—destined, perhaps, by that creative Power which calls nothing into existence in vain, to protect—like the blossoms of our gardens—the germinating fruit beneath, till fully set and perfected. Tear away the petals prematurely, or wither them by an untimely storm, and blight and barrenness ensue! —Even so doth the wary youth become a designing man; while the girl who in her sunny spring-tide believes only in realities, matures into scepticism at last.

In my own case, the forewarning against the ill-intent of my fellow-creatures usually bestowed by some canny grandsire, knowing old aunt,

or spectacled guardian, was derived from the sharp-witted apothegms of the school of modern fiction,—(whose grovelling materialism is not its most pernicious characteristic;)—and, encrusted by a self-conceited contempt of human nature, I dared not give way to the expansion of feeling which such a situation as mine ought to have called forth, lest I should become the dupe of my own emotions.

Like the ungodly of patriarchal times, whose first effort on their restoration to the enjoyment of the earth from whose surface the waters of strife had scarcely subsided, was to build themselves a lofty refuge for future security, hardly had I emerged from the depths of my penurious obscurity, before I began to fortify myself in a watch-tower against the machinations of imaginary enemies.

Of the foresight which had driven me from the Elms, however, I very soon repented. I would have given worlds to make my way back again, had I only known how. The arch countenance of Adela, and sweet face of Caroline, haunted me wherever I went,—flut-

tering before my eyes like winged cherubim. But what chance that Sir Gratian would ride or stalk after me through the snow, to recall me to the warm fireside I had so ungratefully deserted, like Louis XIV., when he fetched back the fugitive Louise de la Vallière from Chaillot to Versailles?

Any design I might entertain of prolonging my sojourn in Yorkshire, on the other hand, was coolly negatived by Gripham. He chose to attribute my speedy return to Wrottesley to my anxiety to rejoin my family.

"I fully enter into your feelings, my dear Sir," said he. "In the present state of the weather, there is nothing to detain you here; and in a comfortable post-chaise, at *your* years, what matters a few degrees more or less of cold?"

For a moment, I was ass enough to fancy that because he saw no reason why I should stay, I must needs go! But a happy pretext suggested itself.

"As I dine to-day with Dr. Temple," said I, as coolly as though the arrangement were an

understood thing, "I have still some chance of a thaw for my journey."

To the Parsonage accordingly I betook myself; and *at* the Parsonage was so warmly welcomed, that I congratulated myself on having been induced by circumstances to fulfil an engagement I ought under *no* circumstances to have neglected; more particularly as Temple's housekeeping, so far from involving barley broth or cribbage, was on a far more gentlemanly footing than that of his Hecatomb-serving neighbour at the Elms; and still more particularly because, the Doctor being a widower and his children still in the nursery, there was nothing to distract my reminiscences of the two fair faces which had taken possession of my vacant mind.

My host was pleasanter and more sociable than, at that period of my life, I had supposed compatible with the rigorism of a black coat. Not that he ever forgot its colour. On the contrary, even in his most communicative moments, Dr. Temple spoke like one accustomed to teach from the pulpit, and deal with

younger people than himself. But there was no reserve about him. Intending no offence, he never seemed in fear of giving it. He called both men and things by their right names, let who *would* be bystanding;—by which means, he obtained my perfect confidence. I hate a fellow who talks to you as though there were an iron closet in his mind, which, like a miser's store, he unlocks only when alone!—

I saw he was as much surprised as Gripham at my early departure from the Elms. But *he* spoke out.

"I did not think," said he, "Sir Gratian would let you off so easily."

"A hospitable old gentleman enough," said I, with affected unconcern; "but more jovial, I should think, than is compatible with so limited a neighbourhood."

"Oh! there is society enough, hereabouts, and of the best kind, when the weather is propitious," replied the Doctor, as if unwilling to hear Wrottesley abused. "We have not many young men however within reach, in the enjoyment of fifteen thousand a year; and a man

who has a charming daughter to settle in life—"

"Is either of Sir Gratian's daughters engaged, then?" cried I, with eager imprudence, on finding him use the singular number;—for my impetuosity placed him on his guard.

"Without professing much deference towards Sir Gratian," rejoined Dr. Temple, with a smile, "I will not permit myself to say 'engaged;' since the attachment to which you probably allude, has his entire disapprobation. But on this point, pray excuse my saying more. It has already caused such serious disagreement among us, that I have pledged myself, both to my conscience and to others, to abstain from further allusion to the subject. I may, however, be permitted to add," he continued, on noticing my air of chagrin, "that two more amiable girls do not exist than my young friends at the Elms."

The words "young friends," re-assured me. But for this paternal phrase, I might have indulged a fear that, in spite of the colour of his cloth, and number of years he had worn it,

one of my cherubs might have taken a fancy to cribbage and barley broth. For I had already noticed a decided touch of spleen in Sir Gratian's allusions to the Rectory.

"Their father seems fondly attached to them?" said I, hoping to drag on the conversation.

"Ay!—after the fashion in which parents are apt to love their children,—by letting them have their own way, till the way becomes of a nature to jar against their own;—as though wilful children were likely to grow up into will-less slaves. In most cases, fathers make but sorry preceptors for daughters. Women require women to understand them:—women require women to guide them. It is a fortunate circumstance for *me*," he added, "whose little girls are unhappily motherless, that I have Sir Gratian before me by way of warning!"

"There is scarcely sufficient analogy of character between you," said I, meaning to be civil, "to threaten much similarity of system."

"Sir Gratian Roxborough," rejoined Dr. Temple, "affords proof not only that women

should be educated by women, but men by men. The spoiled child of a foolish mother, he was sent too young to Eton; and taken away nearly as soon as he was sent, because the home-sick boy could not stand the ordeal of fagging. A father would have *made* him fag on—and made something of him. Instead of which, he was brought up at the Elms, under the nominal care of a tutor and real care of the gamekeeper!—His faults are, consequently, those of an uncultivated mind; and as ignorance and absolute power are sure to beget despotism,—he has exercised a severe influence over his children."

"Has he others, then, besides the two lovely girls I saw so happy under his roof?"

"*Did* they appear happy?" inquired my host, almost inquisitively. "At their age, one never knows what may be the strength of an impression!" added he, half shrugging his shoulders. "But are you serious in inquiring whether he have other children? Did you never hear in London of Charley Roxborough? But I beg your pardon, Mr. Powerscourt; at

present, I fancy, you know little of London life."

"I have heard a Charley Roxborough spoken of by the son of one of my mother's country neighbours," said I, well remembering the enthusiastic terms in which George Whichcote's elder brother, a Meltonian of some renown, had boasted of his feats.

"A country neighbour, doubtless, who is a sporting man?" rejoined the parson, in a tone of interrogation, to which I nodded an affirmative. "Young Roxborough, who is eight or ten years older than his sisters, is a leading man upon the turf."

"Can Sir Gratian then be a man of large fortune?" said I, mentally reverting to observations I had made on the inadequacy of his establishment and its appointments.

"He has an estate of six or seven thousand a-year. At different times, I suspect, he has had to book up large sums for his son. But he pretends otherwise. *He* swears that in the hands of a man of Charley's infallibility in horseflesh, the turf can never be a losing game."

I had too often heard from young Whichcote, the phrase of "the knowing ones taken in," to have much faith in their infallibility.

"Were I, however, in Sir Gratian's place," added Temple, "I scarcely know which would most vex me,—to have my son a loser on the turf, or a systematic winner. It may be the want of patrician blood in my veins,—(for *my* Temple-ship has no affinity with that of the Duke of Buckingham or Lord Palmerston)—but I confess I see no great difference between the turf, adopted as a trade, and any other species of commerce. On the contrary, as bringing a man in contact with all that is lowest and coarsest, and involving manœuvres the vilest,—nothing can be more debasing.—I would as soon make a footman of a son of mine, as bring him up to the turf!"

I was a little confounded. George Whichcote, my intended brother-in-law, was on the turf! But what should I have felt had I then commenced the apprenticeship through which, at Newmarket and Tattersall's, I have since struggled!

"It often amuses me," added Temple, "that is, it used to amuse me when I still frequented the Elms, to hear Sir Gratian and his son inveighing against the impossibility of admitting into their society the wealthy clothiers and other manufacturers with which this neighbourhood abounds,—though engaged in traffic much more ignoble!"

"Is Mr. Roxborough as handsome as his sisters?" said I, not feeling quite competent to the moralities of the case.

"One of the finest young fellows in England! Handsome to a proverb—too handsome, considering his habits and pursuits," replied the uncompromising Temple. "I should even like him better, I think, were he less prepossessing. I loathe the fascination of a man who makes friends only to outreach them. Do you remember the Venetian proverb—

> Di chi mi fido, guardami Dio!
> Di chi *non* mi fido, mi guarderò io."

"And does he spend much time at the Elms?" I inquired, by way of silencing the parson's unknown tongue.

"The time for which he has no better engagement. But that is little enough:—for Mr. Roxborough is as popular as he is handsome. He has been less at home, too, since the girls grew up;—being forced to greater circumspection in the companions he brings with him. The bad company he frequents would be *too* bad for his sisters."

"And the good?"

"If by good you mean fine people, as regards *them* the fashionable Charley considers his sisters completely below par. His respect for his father, such as it is, arises from Sir Gratian's knowledge of horseflesh:—a Yorkshire instinct, which the old gentleman possesses in a supreme degree."

"I must take a few lessons at Newmarket, while I am at Cambridge, to fit me for the society of my future neighbour!" said I, laughing.

"At Cambridge, I trust, you will find better subjects of study," was his grave rejoinder. On which hint, he dismissed the Elms from further discussion; and began to question me

about my projects. On hearing my intention to enter myself immediately at the university, he even ventured to give me some advice, and offer certain letters of introduction; which eventually served to draw down upon me the most unrelenting civility from several of the great dons whom I would fain have left in blissful ignorance of my existence.

My pillow that night—thanks to the parson's hints, and the fluttering of cherubic pinions round my head—was far more sleepless than the night preceding. Do what I would, my cherubim were three in number; the supernumerary cherub sometimes yoking itself to the snow-white wing of Caroline—sometimes to that of Adela. And according as it fluttered, so veered my inclination. The moment I conceived Car to be the engaged cherub, *she* was the object of my idolatry. But as soon as Adela hovered near me in the dual number, she, in her turn, became the cherub of my heart.

What would I have given, that I had found courage to demand specifically of Temple *what* he meant, and *whom* he meant!—Yet, in spite

of his single-hearted frankness, when occasion needed, the Doctor could repress idle interrogation as well as another.

I have sometimes admired, since I attained years of discretion, how, in proportion as the physical world becomes denuded of its mysteries, the moral acquires unfathomable depths. Aided by the Titanic ambition of her monster telescope, Science has unveiled of late years the remotest secrets of the firmament; while volcanoes are as coolly analysed as though their glowing lava were soap-suds. No mine so deep,—no ocean so vast, but the human mind has compassed it round about, or dived into its darkest recesses.

But who has compassed, or who can dive into the recesses of the human mind?—Who is able to penetrate the mists interposed by civilized man between his own heart and that of his brother?

My speculations on the 20th of January, of my eighteenth year, were however a trifle less philosophical. All I cared about the human mind, was the portion of it inclined towards me at Roxborough Elms.

As the only reasonable excuse for prolonging my stay in Yorkshire, I informed Gripham of my intention to take leave in person of Sir Robert:—on which he produced a formal written adieu from the old gentleman, informing me that, being confined to his bed-room and unable to see me, he profited by the occasion of Mr. Gripham's visit to assure me of his good wishes, and that he was my humble servant to command.

In short, I was fairly bowed out of house and home; and let such of my readers as are about to throw aside the volume and dismiss me as a "snob," or "spooney," be pleased to remember, that I had only ten days' experience of wealth and consequence—ten days, which still appeared a dream,—to oppose to the influence of a subaltern position, a state of absolute nonentityism,—for the preceding eighteen years. A sapling does not strengthen in a day into a sturdy oak.

Nevertheless, when I found the milestones flying rapidly by, as I retraced my way towards Hentsfield, along a road which a rapid thaw was

rendering as soft as I had shown myself, I cursed in my heart the memory of Caius Gracchus, by whom those memorials of distance were bequeathed to posterity to remind me how every minute removed me further and further from the fairest feature of my new neighbourhood, in the shape of a goodly mansion of free-stone, called Roxborough Elms. Conscious that I had too readily suffered a course to be marked out for me, when, had I insisted upon it, no one could have prevented me from pitching my tent at Wrottesley Hall, a bitter revulsion of feeling suddenly nerved my courage. I swore it was the last time I would be made a fool of!—Hentsfield should find that, during my fortnight's absence, I had cooled into a man.

Methinks I see myself entering the little over-furnished, over-fanciful drawing-room, containing my lares and penates, which I had held to be a chamber of dais till edified by the lofty proportions of my new residence,—trying to look the serene and dignified gentleman I aspired to be thought. Though my *entrée* was as frigid

as the reception that used to be given me on my periodical returns from Eagle House, my mother and sisters were not ashamed to greet me with the enthusiasm due to a victor returning from Marathon! — But I received their caresses as if petrified—accepting the best place by the fire, offered me for the first time in my life, as though it were mine by right divine; and to the trio of "hopes," chaunted catch-wise, that I might not have caught cold on my journey, vouchsafing only monosyllables in reply.

But with even these, neither the young ladies nor the old had any disposition to quarrel. Another right divine achieved by my heirship was, that I could do no wrong. They had not so much as courage to question me when they saw I had no mind to be questioned; and on my condescending to break the embarrassing silence into which they had subsided, by inquiries after George Whichcote and the Captain whom, so shortly before I had left paramount in their favour, I knew not whether to attribute the brevity of the answers I received to a diminished

estimate of their adorers, or increased deference towards myself.

At length my mother hazarded so broad a hint, that henceforward their Hentsfield neighbours were likely to obtain less interest in their eyes, as to justify my inquiring whether she had any thoughts of quitting the country?

"Not at present, perhaps," she hesitatingly replied, more embarrassed by my coolness than a mother ought ever to feel in presence of her child,—or rather, more embarrassed than a mother ever feels in presence of any child but one she has injured. "But I conclude, Harry," she rejoined, on detecting a gleam of compunction in my eyes, "that as soon as you settle in Yorkshire, we are likely to see more of Wrottesley than Hentsfield?"

"Nothing will give me greater pleasure, mother, than to receive you and my sisters as guests in my house—if I ever settle there at all. But for nearly three years to come, I shall be at college. At the expiration of that time, my truant disposition will probably take me to the continent."

"At college for the next three years?" exclaimed both my sisters at once,—their awe and reserve merged in astonishment, that the education which had been voted so complete at Eagle House, required so lengthy an appendix.

"Now you are your own master, you really mean to go to school again?" added Emily, the braver of the two.

"You are well aware how deeply I have always regretted that my mother could not afford to give me an university education," said I; "and I have as many deficiencies of connection as of instruction to make good. The bumpkin school which was to qualify me for a marching regiment, sends me all but friendless into the world. Even with your own associates, I have been allowed but a limited acquaintance. Whereas at Cambridge, I shall associate with those of my own age and condition; so that when, at some future time, I marry and settle at Wrottesley, I shall feel myself a little less of a Paria than now."

They sat rebuked. The Castles in the Air they had been building during my sojourn in

the north disappeared with a celerity of evanishment worthy the disappearance of an ogre's in a pantomime!—Nothing remained but the selfish brother warming his knees beside their fire; and a feeling of blank regret at the precipitation with which they had dismissed the Captain of Lancers, and discouraged the second son of the Squire!—

It was at least some tribute to the goodness of my disposition, that they could have supposed me capable of forgetting in a moment the aggravations of the last dozen years: their scornful disregard of my comfort and their haughty rejection of the affection which, in earlier boyhood, had yearned towards them with brotherly fondness. The harvest they were reaping, however bitter, was of no sowing but their own. But they had estimated both my heart and head as far softer than they found them.

"And when, pray, do you leave us for Cambridge, Harry?" inquired my mother in a tone of pique.

"That will depend upon what I learn to-morrow at Wilsbury, Madam," said I.

And while Dora ejaculated pretty audibly, "That odious Wilsbury!" I proceeded to inform them, that my guardian, Sir Robert Hawley, purposing no interference with my plans beyond the payment of my allowance, I intended to consult my friend Andrew Grove respecting my college career.

"But surely your friend Andrew Grove is a sizar?" exclaimed Emily, much as she would have announced him to be a burglar.

"I have heard the Whichcotes say they would not be seen speaking to him at Cambridge!" added Dora.

"They would have said as much of myself, a little month ago!" was my cool rejoinder; "though now, I may perhaps feel inclined to return the compliment. But I am as well content to take Grove's opinion concerning my future conduct or career—as *he* was to bestow his friendship on the lubberly boy whom he saw exiled from his home and family, to be cuffed into what learning he could pick up in a snobbery like Eagle House!"

To the Grove in question applied, in short,

the exception implied in my melancholy definition of "*all but* friendless." I knew my sisters considered it, such an exception as it was, as scarcely worth the making; for from the earliest of my schoolboy days, one of their favourite modes of persecution had been to bring down my mother's anathema on Wilsbury.

The family of my friend Grove was, in fact, the type of a class becoming (the more's the pity) gradually extinct in Old England.—The father was a Hertfordshire yeoman:—a widower, whose household was tended by two rosy daughters into whose parlour a piano had never found its way; but from whose dairy and barn-yard issued the finest butter and poultry in the parish. Though good-looking, and even well-mannered, because courteous and unaffected, they had no pretension to be ladies; and, except when taking their turn to figure in their father's shaky old gig at the Hoo races, never dreamed of bringing themselves into contact with the world that calls itself fine.

Pride they had indeed; but it was wholly concentrated in their brother. They had another,

married and thriving, in business in London. But Andrew was destined to be the first gentleman of their family. Andrew was intended for the Church. Though the Groves had been settled at Wilsbury for more than two hundred years, it was the first time the representative of the family had held his head sufficiently above the world to bestow a classical education on one of his sons to fit him for a learned profession; and the old man, whose knowledge of life was derived from his annual visit to his London son, for the Smithfield Cattle Show, and the two girls, who had never migrated a dozen miles from Wilsbury, being accustomed to consider their parish priest with the same spirit of veneration in which a devout Catholic contemplates the Pope, the notion of having a brother in holy orders, appeared almost too great an honour to be realized!—

The suggestion—when first made by the worthy yeoman's half-doting mother, who resided with them at Wilsbury, and promised to bequeath her savings (amounting to two thousand pounds) to her grandson, on condition of

his entering the Church—had been at first vehemently opposed by old Grove, who destined his younger son to succeed him in his farm. But when it was made clear to him that his daughters Bessy and Belle were perfectly qualified to assume the management of the fifty acres of land constituting his domain,—and that Andrew, who was some years their junior, was too slight and delicate for a life of labour,—he withdrew his paternal protest. The Benjamin of the family was accordingly sent to Eagle House, at the cost of his ambitious grandmother; and, by dint of rare abilities and the highest courage, soon attained such influence in that little world, as to be able to afford valuable protection to the friendless future heir of Wrottesley Hall.

We liked each other at first sight. Who can say *why* people like each other—whether in love or friendship? And from the day of our mutual adoption, our lives had been marked by a series of benefits conferred on one side, and gratitude rendered on the other. Andrew was every way better off than myself. He was not

only able to assist my lagging duncehood through the tasks of the day; but hastened to share with me the plentiful gifts he received from home. In the second year of our companionship, I was invited to spend half the Midsummer holidays at Wilsbury; and as it happened that my sisters had just then a project for visiting Worthing, Hentsfield found it convenient to bestow its dignified consent.

That wholesome fortnight was the first pleasant moment of my life!—To a boy, a farm is always an object of interest; and after the dull proprieties of Hentsfield, the meadows, orchard, trout-stream, fish-ponds, barnyard, and granaries of Wilsbury, with their home-brewing, home-baking savours,—constituted in my eyes a little kingdom. Its bountiful, open-handed simplicity of housekeeping, was so different from the penurious gentility of a home where all was sacrificed to show;—the hearty laughter of the Groves' round table, or the joyous romping of the hayfield, was so much pleasanter than the prim elegance of Hentsfield!—

Nevertheless, when the following Christmas approached, I tried to paint Hentsfield to myself in its brightest colours; having resolved to obtain permission for my friend Andrew to return my visit. I could not indeed offer him the same pastimes, or the warm hospitality so liberally bestowed on myself; but I would do my best to show him that the kindness of his family was felt as it deserved.

What, therefore, was my consternation, when my petition to that effect from Eagle House was met by a decided negative! A letter written by my mother, but evidently dictated by my sisters, apprized me that, having ascertained by more particular enquiry that the Groves, whom I represented as an old county family, were in reality mere farmers, there must be an immediate end of the intimacy!—"Had she been aware of the state of the case, nothing would have induced her to countenance my connection with persons belonging to so different a sphere from my own."

This hateful letter fell like a lump of lead upon my heart. But how to communicate the

important part of its contents to Andrew, without conveying still greater pain to his own? For speak I must. In the sanguine trust of boyhood, I had made my invitation, nothing doubting my mother's sanction;—and to tell him that the warmth and hospitality of his family had been so miserably thrown away, was an effort almost beyond my courage.

While revolving the difficulties of my position, and ransacking my memory for precedents among the fictions which constituted my law and prophets, I was spared all further perplexity by the straight-forwardness of Grove.

"Enough said, enough said, my dear Harry!" cried he, interrupting the hemmings and ha-ings with which I was commencing my explanation. "Why waste another word upon the matter? Your people are finer folks than mine, and don't care to have wheat-straw littering their drawing-room!—No matter!—I dare say they're right. I dare say I should be out of place there!—But next summer, as soon as there'll be any thing going on again at Wilsbury worth your taking

part in, you must make your visit to *us* of double length, and so bring matters even."

How was I to answer?—Time enough, I thought, when the period arrived to which he alluded, to tell him the mortifying truth. But though I answered not a word, the tears that started into my eyes on reflecting that I must never again cross the threshold of dear, cheerful, sunshiny, open-handed Wilsbury, spoke for me. But while Andrew gave me a hearty grasp of the hand in token of sympathy, he hazarded no inquiries, likely to elicit what was evidently grievous to my feelings. And from that day, as by common consent, neither of us ever alluded to the home or family of the other.

I fancied, when he returned to Eagle House after the ensuing holidays, that he was a trifle less cordial. It might be that he was only graver,—graver from advancing maturity,—graver from the more serious nature of his studies. For he was now "preparing for the university." Another year, and he was to be entered at Cambridge. And when that period

arrived, and he was to leave me alone at the head of the Lilliputian community of which we had been as the pillars of Hercules, he threw himself into my arms, and held me in as fond an embrace as though he had been parting from a brother. Probably because, better apprized than myself of the discrepancy between the son of the yeoman, and the son of a cavalry Colonel whose surviving relatives enjoyed the name of being proud as Lucifer, he felt that the parting was to be final.

Such was the friend to whom I was hastening;—such the honest hearth-side by which I was expected. For I had dispatched a line fromYorkshire informing Andrew of my altered fortunes, and announcing an early visit;—and though defeated in my sanguinary projects at Roxborough Elms, had little doubt that wreaths of laurels awaited the conquering hero at Wilsbury.

Already I was building new castles—though under a roof of thatch.

CHAPTER VII.

And how like you this shepherd's life, Master Touchstone?

Truly in respect it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious.

SHAKSPEARE.

Most people have experienced, at one moment or other of their lives, the charm attached to an object by prohibition. In the stuffy dormitory of Eagle House, nay, even in my green-papered room at Hentsfield, how often had my wakeful reveries pondered upon the happy homeliness of Wilsbury, smelling of fresh straw in summer, and wood-smoke in winter;—the incessant crowing of its poultry, lowing of its kine, neighing of its colts, with an occasional scream from the favourite old peacock when a change of weather was at hand!

The whole scene used to rise before my eyes, refreshing as a landscape of Hobbima, Gainsborough, or Constable to those of an amateur; the sunshine glistening down on the patches of moss that mottled the venerable beech-trees; or lighting up into living sapphires the iris-blossoms whose dagger-like leaves crested the thatch of an old outhouse.

For the proverb that "the absent are ever in the wrong" holds good with persons only, not with things; and at a distance, the heart is apt to yearn after remembered scenes, and exaggerate their charm.

Even Bessie and Belle, who like Jeannie Deans were nothing more than good "sonsie lasses," acquired attraction in my eyes from hearing them perpetually scoffed at; nay, even beauty—from the moment I heard it hinted at Hentsfield that their attentions to a raw schoolboy like myself purported to entangle him before he knew what he was about. I was just at the age to be flattered by the mere notion of such a project.

It was consequently in some flutter of spirits

that I approached the spot which had maintained so large a portion in my day-dreams. The prospect of seeing Belle and Bessie again, made me almost nervous, from my conviction that a glance at their honest faces would enable me to detect which of the two had fretted sorest over my absence.

It is true the youngest was several years my senior; but this only brought her to the full maturity of womanly beauty. Whereas I was still as gawky a youth as though the frolics of fortune had not placed me in the enjoyment of eighteen thousand a year.

The proof that I had not risen to the level of my destinies was, that I had not courage to approach Wilsbury in the carriage which I had not yet found time to replace, or my mother courage to refuse me. Leaving it at a small post town, from which the farm lay at nearly a mile's distance, I had to wade through the mud of a sleety, slushy thaw,—of all the varied costumes in which Mother Earth arrays herself, decidedly the least becoming.

I stole in, consequently, through the back

gate, unannounced, and like a thief in the night. But alas! the sights, and sounds, and smells of a farm-yard are far less grateful in winter, than in that sweet summer-time when every object under the sun attains a momentary grace. The straw trampled into the mud of the barn-yard, looked like a vast dung-heap. Flocks of ducks and geese, banished from the horse-pond by half-broken masses of ice, set up a discordant gobble at sight of a stranger; and the clacking pattens with which the red-elbowed Belle and blowsy Bessie came hurrying from their housewifery to welcome me, reminded me, sorely against my will, that there was such a place in the world as Roxborough Elms. But on reaching the parlour, where, in a stifling atmosphere adapted to the infirmities of the doting old grandmother and her cat, sat my friend Andrew, poring over heaps of papers and musty volumes piled around his reading-desk of green baize,—all was forgotten in the joy of seeing him again!

The colour rushed into his cheeks as I hurried towards him with the same eagerness of

embrace he had bestowed upon myself two years before. But the momentary excitement at an end, I noticed with regret that, in attaining the stature and expansion of manhood, he had lost the brilliant flush of health which distinguished his appearance when "we lived and loved together;"—and the embarrassment of his manner when, on sitting down to talk over old times and new, my involuntary glance towards the old lady and the girls indicated a wish that we could be alone, satisfied me that I had done wrong to apprize him beforehand of my wondrous change of fortunes. He had not courage to invite me, as he would have otherwise done, into his little bed-room without a fire. The distance between us was now too great for the ease and comfort of friendship.

An announcement to the girls that I was come to dine and sleep at Wilsbury, produced the desired effect of leaving us alone with the old lady,—an auditress as little objectionable as the blind bullfinch moping in its cage over the window-seat. For Belle and Bessie hurried off to prepare my old chamber, and supervise the

killing of the fatted calf: and it was plain that I was affording far greater pleasure to the hospitable house by my unceremonious visit, than had it been in my power to afford a formal invitation to my own.

"It is kind indeed, Mr. Powerscourt, to come to us so soon after becoming your own master," said Andrew, reddening anew with the consciousness of our altered position. But, freed from the embarrassment of observation, I lost no time in satisfying him that there must be an end of the word "Mister" between us, or an end of our friendship; and by the time I had fully described my impatience under our long separation, and the number of times I had waking wished myself, and sleeping dreamed myself, seated by his side in the old parlour, precisely as I then found myself, we were Harry and Andrew again, as on the shingly gravel of the scurvy play-ground at Eagle House.

But just as, when approaching the farm, I felt vexed at my irrepressible disgust at the unseemliness of the place, and the cheerlessness and boorishness of what in summer time had

smiled so wooingly, I was ashamed to find that it cost me some effort to decline speaking of myself and my prospects till I had heard from Andrew some account of his own. I tried to listen with interest to his details of his father's failing health; and his apprehensions that he might be called upon by the old man's death to take charge of the family, before he was qualified for Orders. But as yet a poor dissembler, my over-acted attention soon apprized him that it was time to talk of Wrottesley Hall.

Already, in short, had the vanities of the world, working upon the frailties of human nature, created a great gulf between the two at one time so fondly united; and, more clear-sighted than myself, Andrew was wise enough to perceive its existence and submit to the necessity. Shaping his prudent counsels as to the government of my college career as though I had never been other than Wrottesley of Wrottesley, he advised my being introduced to the Master of Trinity by a letter from my guardian, Sir Robert Hawley, who was a member of the University. "For both our sakes," added

he, "let the intimacy between us be buried under the threshold of Wilsbury. It will not do for a poor scholar like myself to be keeping company with a fellow-commoner."

There was something so frank in this admission of his sense of inferiority, that I was very differently affected by it from the disgust with which I saw his sisters appear at their father's dinner-table, tricked out with a pretension to finery such as only served to betray their want of refinement.

I had looked forward to spending the evening with Andrew, in talking over the incidents of my journey to Wrottesley: sadly in want of somebody to whom to relate my lonesomeness in the great house, and describe the beauty and discourtesy of Adela and her sister. But though the old grandame retired to bed, and Farmer Grove sat dozing with apoplectic stupor in his easy chair, the two damsels seemed unwilling to lose their share of the pleasant chat, to them so rare an enjoyment; and I was consequently forced to restrict myself to inquiries concerning the prospects of their brother.

It seemed strange to one whose horizon had been recently so marvellously extended, that the utmost object of Andrew's ambition should be still the curacy of Wilsbury or some neighbouring parish. "If, added to his grandmother's inheritance, his profession enabled him to make up two hundred a year, he should be enabled to settle in life; near enough to the farm for daily intercourse with his family, and affording to his sisters the sanction and credit of his black gown."

A month before, and even to *me*, two hundred a-year would have appeared a highly desirable independence. But *now*, I shuddered at sight of the books and papers piled in the corner of the room, which were to produce no nobler result than what I was beginning to regard as protracted penury. I could almost have quarrelled with the apathy of Andrew Grove, in not inquiring of me at once whether any thing in the shape of Church preferment were included in the property I had inherited. Nothing but the presence of the two blowsabelles—the prospect of whose round-eyed wonder

and hearty interjections appalled me—prevented my telling him outright, that he might count upon the reversion of Wrottesley Rectory and five hundred per annum; or the far better living in my gift of Rainham, at the other extremity of the county, whichever might first fall vacant.

It *did* prevent me, however. A boyhood spent in a house full of females had inspired me with an instinctive horror of scenes; and I waited till even their appetite for gossip was sufficiently satiated to admit of their perceiving that, the elderlies having been long at rest, the hour was a late one for keeping company with their brother and his friend.

"*Now*, we can enjoy a little comfortable chat!" said I—when at length the steps—to which two years before, at Hentsfield, I had been ass enough to indite some halting stanzas as "fairy footsteps," were heard shaking the rafters over head;—drawing my chair closer to the hearth, as if fancying that nearer juxta-position would help to extinguish the moral distance between us. "Now, I can open my heart to you.'

Andrew looked surprised; for *his* was never shut:—a gangway for all comers,—not a privileged enclosure, with hours for opening and closing.

But without further preamble—though I fear with some redundance of flourish—I proceeded to sketch, for his edification, my newly conceived Castles in the Air. After taking a creditable degree at Cambridge, I was to establish my residence at Wrottesley,—become a leading man in my county, and at some future time, an influential member of parliament. While *he* was to be my college chum and the future Rector of my parish—secure of eventual dignities in the Church through the parliamentary interest of his faithful Achates, Wrottesley Wrottesley of Wrottesley Hall.

Accustomed to read in my favourite fictions of every obliged party rushing to the bosom of his benefactor, or "flinging himself at his feet,"—I was probably prepared to find the arms of poor Andrew encircling my knees, or my neck. —For it certainly astonished me not a little, that he preserved not only his perpendicular in

the uncomfortable horse-hair arm-chair in which he was seated, but a silence of some moments', or rather minutes' duration.

To do him justice, however, when he spoke at last, his voice was hoarse and broken.

"Do not think of such a thing, Harry," said he; (he had dismissed the *Mister* of the case with a vengeance!) "Your generous proposal proceeds from a want of knowledge of the world, of which I should be a vagabond to take advantage. At Cambridge, even in my humble sphere, I have seen something of life; and can promise you, that sincere as are now your good intentions towards me, and firm your intention of raising me to your own level, you would soon grow weary of the abortive attempt."

"You do not know me, Andrew!" said I, with some indignation.

"I never knew you till *now!*" was his earnest rejoinder,—bestowing upon me at the same time a grasp of the hand that made my knuckles crack. "But since we parted, the rough buffets of the world have taught me, among other lessons, to know *myself.* I should make but a

bad dependant. Not from over-loftiness of spirit,—not because too proud to submit to obligation. But I must be either myself, or nothing; and should cease to be myself under the constraint of undeserved benefaction. You used to call me at school, 'Old Matter-of-fact.' —You see that I have not lost my claim to the name!"

"And who wants you to forfeit it, my dear fellow?" I retorted. "Do you fancy that my desire to facilitate your progress in life arises from the wish to create a toady—a sneak—a parasite?"—

"Whatever you may *wish*," he gravely interrupted, "such would be the miserable result of my accepting what must exercise a paramount influence over my words, thoughts, and actions. I am getting on well at Cambridge:—better than I would have incurred the charge of vanity by telling you, but for your unexampled friendliness. I have obtained an exhibition of eighty pounds a year; and flatter myself you will learn, on your arrival, that I have not been losing my time. The changes you propose *must*

unsettle me—*might* ruin me. I do not feel so sure of myself, as to defy the influence of temptation. Do not turn away from me in anger, my dear Harry. I am not the ungrateful, stubborn prig you may be disposed to fancy but—"

"But much learning doth make thee mad!" interrupted I, in my turn. "Well, well! every man to his taste.—Since you are enamoured of russet and hobnails, you must even plod up hill in your own way.—But I own I would rather have had the future Rector of my parish assume, at an earlier period of life, the ground on which I hope hereafter to see him stand by my side."

And again a little disappointed at the composure with which my manifesto was received, I was glad to relieve my over-bursting consequence by proceeding to talk of my personal projects, and of Wrottesley Hall. But though previously eager for a confidant, that I might complain of the assumptions of Gripham, and sauciness of Adela and her sister, my feelings were chilled by the check I had received. I did

not choose the friend so prompt to say me nay, to become cognizant of the slights offered me. But as I had rashly entered upon my story, I was fain to cover my irresolution by enlarging upon the beauties, or rather capabilities, of my new place; and the attentions of my neighbours Sir Gratian Roxborough and Sir Robert Hawley.

Poor Andrew listened, in what I conceived to be admiring silence: and it might be that my previous discomfiture led me to dwell with somewhat plebeian circumstantiality on the extent of my park—the glories of my gallery of ancient masters—the value of my plate closet, and other goods and chattels. For at last he broke out with—

"This would never do at Cambridge, Harry!"

"*What* would not do?—Wrottesley Hall, and eighteen thousand a-year?"

"The smallest approach to a boast of possessing it! Intimacy with a snob like myself would not be more fatal. Among the fellow-commoners you will consort with, are many your equals in fortune, and thrice as many your superiors in rank."

My ears tingled a little at the hint.

"And these you will find distinguish themselves by studied simplicity. Hauteur or pretension would ostracize them at once."

"You do not, I hope, consider my statement 'to a friend' of the good fortune that has lately befallen me, an instance of pretension?" cried I, with some indignation.

"On the contrary: I take it as an act of confidence. But were you to enlarge within hearing of the young Marquis of Clanalbin, or Lord Hampden, or twenty others of their set, upon things which they accept as a matter of course, and as unworthy mention—"

"I should be sent to Coventry, eh?"—

"Not exactly that;—but you would probably become the object of some joke, or nickname, far easier to resent than rebut."

"I flatter myself," said I, swelling into enormous dimensions, "that I am able to secure myself against groundless insult, even on the part of a Scotch Marquis."

"There!—One such phrase at Cambridge would get up a laugh against you for a month!"

"And how is it that *you*, Andrew, escape in whole skin from such very fastidious and facetious antagonists?" said I, still chafing and fuming.

"From being wholly beneath their notice. A poor student, like myself, working his way to preferment, has no need

> To bring his slovenly, unhandsome gown,
> Betwixt the wind and their nobility.

Unworthy to be laughed *with*, I escape being laughed *at*."

"And so shall I!—Whatever you may be pleased to think of the business, so shall I!" cried I, still more and more irate.

"Admit, at least," said Andrew, good-humouredly, "that my first expression of an independant opinion has sufficed to prove that 'Old Matter-of-fact' was right in believing the characters of benefactor and *protégé* likely to sit uneasily on both!"

The rebuke struck home. But though heartily ashamed of myself, I could not by any measure of entreaty induce him to resume his course of lectures.

"Time will teach you better than I can," was his laughing reply. "The rubs of the world are better lessons than a thousand homilies."

But though I affected to assent with a careless laugh, I neither laughed nor assented when, within the expiration of two months from my being entered at Trinity, the rubs in question had been liberally administered. Counting largely on the obsequience I had read of as the natural tribute to such a fortune as mine, and for which the ready adulation of my own family seemed to afford a precedent, I established myself at college on a superabundant scale of magnificence. Having no one to announce my consequence, I attempted to make it known by a display demanding explanations: there was none to render.

In any time or place, a fortune that requires accounting for, is likely to prove a stumbling-block to the possessor. Had I, in pursuance of Andrew Grove's advice, made myself known only as Powerscourt of Trinity—leaving to time and chance to publish that I was Henry Wrottesley Powerscourt, of Wrottesley Hall, and

about to become, per sanction of the Heralds' College, Henry Wrottesley Wrottesley, Esq.,—I might have made friends before I made a single enemy. But when it appeared that no one could vouch for the origin of my four horses and furniture of inlaid rosewood,—my embossed plate, and arms-enwoven damask,—I was voted a *parvenu!*

A younger son of our Hentsfield landlord, Mr. Whichcote of Barming, who was reading for orders, took occasion to visit upon me the scornful dismissal his brother George had received at the hands of Dora, by causing it to be whispered that I was the son of a widow in narrow circumstances, residing in a small cottage in the neighbourhood of his family seat, "who had suddenly come into a fortune, nobody knew how, and was setting up for a gentleman, nobody knew why." And as the report did not of course reach my ear, but made itself manifest only in the hauteur exhibited towards me by some, and the coldness with which others receded from my acquaintance,—I had no means of disproof. Instead of becoming the object of

the subservience I fancied to be my due, even those to whom I had been formally presented by the Master of Trinity (from whom Sir Robert Hawley's letter secured me every attention) seemed little disposed to intimacy. The unlucky printed card of "*Mr.* Wrottesley Powerscourt, Wrottesley Hall,"—a pen being slightly passed through the latter name, so as scarcely to admit of the substitution of that of my college,—sent me three parts of the way to Coventry; and from that day forward, instead of being called "Powerscourt," as would have been the case had I passed for a good fellow, I was never named (behind my back) otherwise than "Mister Wrottesley Hall."

It was of course only by the formal deportment of my new associates, that I was made to understand my unpopularity. But when I could no longer blind myself to the fact, how I longed to fix a quarrel upon one of them, to bring them to an explanation! Instead of regretting my own obstinacy in rejecting the warning of Andrew Grove, I was ass enough to fancy that, somehow or other, the secret of our friendship

had transpired, and exposed me to contumely; whereas my poor friend's assertion was the exact truth,—that, beyond the limits of his own college, his very name was unknown.

"I wish," said I, as carelessly as I could, one day, after hooking myself to the arm of Tom Whichcote,—whom I did not yet know to be my enemy, and whose wicked wit made his personal insignificance acceptable to what was just then the crack set of the university,—"I wish, my dear Whichcote, you would take an opportunity of introducing me to Lord John Jocelyn."

Affecting a convenient deafness, my friend Tom contrived to make me repeat the request twice, before he chose it to reach his comprehension.

"On what grounds do you wish me to propose the introduction?" retorted he,—becoming suddenly as grave as though I had propounded some abstruse problem.

"*Grounds?*—The grounds of desiring to be acquainted with one whom his friends seem to find so agreeable," said I, trying not to appear nettled.

"Oh!" replied Whichcote,—in a tone plainly implying, "is *that* all you have to say for yourself?"—But as I looked him full in the face, as though his interjection required annotation, he was pleased to add, "It is necessary, however, that such a wish should be mutual; and proposals of this nature usually come from the superior in rank."

"I was not aware," said I, bitterly mortified, "that at Lord John's age and mine, an introduction must be regulated by the rules of court etiquette. Nor was the intimacy between Lord John and yourself likely to enlighten me."

"You have cited a case in point," replied Whichcote, not a whit embarrassed. "As you say, I believe there is scarcely a man at Cambridge with whom John is on more friendly terms than myself. But take notice, that we were at Eton together; and that the acquaintance was wholly of his own seeking, and the intimacy of his own making."

It half rose to my lips, to remind my impertinent companion in how many ways he had managed to make himself useful to Lord John,

by slaving for him for his examination—riding his restive horses—training his greyhounds—or looking after his boat. But in a verbal encounter with a glib-tongued fellow like Whichcote, I was sure of getting the worst of it.

"The chief motive of my desire to know Lord John Jocelyn," I resumed,—looking as pompous as a President of the Council,—"is that, having property to some amount in the county represented by his elder brother, and of which his father, the Duke of Sheffield, is Lord-Lieutenant, I considered the acquaintance equally desirable to both."

"Your new estate is in Yorkshire, then," inquired Whichcote, with a provoking emphasis on the adjective. "Ah! *that* accounts for it."

"Accounts for *what?*"

"For Jocelyn's fighting a little shy."

"You consider that he *has* fought shy of me?" said I,—every pulse in my frame throbbing.

"Come, come! Don't make more of my words than they are worth, my dear fellow," remonstrated my wily companion. "I have,

perhaps, used a stronger expression than I ought.—I mean only that, in a family of such decided political tendencies as the Duke of Sheffield's, it is but natural a little hesitation should occur in coming forward to a new neighbour—without antecedents or connections in the county—with no one to vouch for his opinions."

"Right,—quite right!" cried I, with ill-repressed bitterness. "It is, as you say, by a very different mode of introduction that the owner of Wrottesley Hall should be made known to any member of the family of Sheffield."

"Well! don't forget to speak to the Lord Chamberlain about it!" cried Whichcote, so loud as to be overheard by Lord Clanalbin and two or three of his set, who were standing on the door-step of a saddler's, into which my companion affected to turn after a parting nod to myself. And all I could do was to hurry off, and cool myself by a solitary saunter along the Trumpington road, where my hack, the handsomest in the university, never failed to produce a sensation.

My own sensations, meanwhile, were far from enviable. Though blind to my defects, I could not blind myself to their consequences. Whether my position were the growth of wilful blunders, or an evil feeling maliciously engendered against me, the result was the same:—that my company was sought only by such as were themselves unsought. After all, *que diable allais-je faire dans cette galère!* What need had one, so thoroughly his own master, to put himself to school!—What business had I at Cambridge at all!—

Already I had determined that my first term should be my last. But I wanted some person to whom to announce my intention. I could not exactly play the stage-hero in the Senate House, and enunciate my "I banish *you!*" to the Vice-Chancellor and his brother big-wigs; who, in *my* case, were not the offending parties.

CHAPTER VIII.

Oh! the fierce wretchedness vain glory brings us.
Who would not wish to be from wealth exempt,
Since riches point to misery and contempt!
Who'd be so mock'd with honour?—Who would live
But in a dream of friendship?

SHAKSPEARE.

It was spring-time.—The air was stirred by those indistinct murmurs which accompany the revival of nature at the period when

La terre est nubile, et brûle d'être mère.

By degrees, the soothing influence of the atmosphere, and the fair aspect of a world in which, since its last revolution in its sphere, I had attained so enlarged an interest, soothed me to a more rational frame of mind: the evidence of

which was, that on re-entering Cambridge, I hurried to Peter House the moment I had put up my horse, to pay the first visit I had made to my friend Grove for many weeks past. I had been pitiful enough to justify his prognostications by making his high-minded refusal to become my debtor a pretext of offence, to justify the coolness I found convenient. But, smarting under Whichcote's insolence, my first impulse was to seek the society of the only man in the university with whom I was thoroughly at ease.

It was dark. So much the better. I should not be seen groping my way up the dirty staircase to his miserable room.

But that it was the voice of Grove which desired me to "come in," I should have fancied it, on my entrance, untenanted. For my friend was so notorious a sap, that the dim twilight, which no longer admitted of study, seemed to announce his absence. But I soon descried him seated near the open window—refreshing himself, after his day's labours, by a whiff of the evening air.

"What the deuce are you doing here alone,

in the dark, my dear Andrew?" cried I, taking the place beside him.

"Enjoying the perils and dangers of reverie!" replied he.

"Without so much as a cigar to keep you company?" I retorted, taking out my case, and offering him one, as an apology for smoking.

"Thank you!" said he, more cheerfully. "But I am not to be tempted. Abstinence is easier than temperance; and *I* can't afford to smoke!"

"Not *afford* it?—Absurd!" said I, though my own bill at Hudson's already amounted to a hundred pounds.

"I was cogitating when you entered, whether I could even afford to meditate!" added he. "People say, that reflexion strengthens the mind.—I find it unhinge mine."

And already the cheerful intonation of his voice was subsiding.

"If by reflexion you mean moping by owl-light in this confounded dull room, commanding only a squint up at the sky," said I, with forced gaiety, to rally him out of his despon-

dency, "I agree with you, that it is enough to make a hypochondriac of the merriest dog alive! —*I* have been musing 'among hedge-row elms and hillocks green;' and, if not the wiser, am certainly all the better for it."

"You are your own master, my dear Harry: *I*, the slave of the bitter hag, called Poverty.— *My* Sycorax says, 'stay at home and work.'"

"Ay! That you may play the more hereafter," said I, my mean mind misgiving me, that he might perhaps be trying to bring on a renewal of the offers it was no longer my wish to repeat.

"Rather, lest I acquire an appetite for playing!" was his mild rejoinder. "Most of us are disposed to trifle away our lives, at the sacrifice of our duties; and it is lucky perhaps, that some are sufficiently ill off, to be glad of being paid to be serious. But, tell me," said he, interrupting himself, as if afraid that *he* was too much so for my taste,—"how does a college life agree with you?—Are *you* playing, or working? I was glad not to see you in the party I saw starting from Lord Hampden's

lodgings the day before yesterday for Newmarket."

"To answer your questions by order of precedence, my dear Grove," said I, "a college life suits me so little, that I am not likely to attempt another term."

"Leave Cambridge?" cried he, in dismay. "In a fit of caprice—or indolence—or pique?"

"Say disgust, and you will hit the mark."

"And at the risk of passing for weak and inconsistent,—nay, worse," continued he, in a breath. "For the world will take it for granted that you have got into some college scrape; and that you take yourself off to avoid the penalty of rustication."

"I am luckily not so dependent on the world's good opinion," I rejoined, "as to find its calumnies of paramount importance. What signifies the worst people can invent?—What have I to fear?"

"Every man is more or less dependent on public esteem," was his grave rejoinder.

"Ay!—more or less—and my portion of peril is of the smallest! Only ask yourself,

Grove—you, who are a philosopher—why, with youth, health, and fortune at my disposal, I should weary out a couple of my brightest years in a life of subjection?"

"Because that very fortune places you in a position to make it necessary to the happiness of many, that you should qualify your mind to make the best use of it," replied Grove, with earnest gravity. "From your confidences to me at Wilsbury, I infer that you do not intend to become a mere fox-hunting squire?"

"No—*that* market is over-stocked! Yorkshire is over-run by such vermin. But even if, as I then announced to be probable, I succeed Sir Robert Hawley at some future period, is a university education essential to a Member of Parliament?"

"Extensive knowledge and a liberalized mind are essential; and where is a man's education so easy to accomplish as at our seats of learning? Where is he so secure against the pleasures of the world—the temptations of society?"

"No where, certainly!" I rejoined, with a bitter sneer. "But I am of opinion that he

may liberalize his mind more effectually by foreign travel—by associating with men of the world, instead of boys and old women—and enlarging his views by observation rather than by the dryness of study."

"In short, like others who have become prematurely their own masters, you are flying to the continent as an excuse for self-indulgence!"

I was amused to see him thus excited. For my resolution was the result of momentary petulance, and likely to melt into air like the fumes of the cigar I was smoking out of Andrew's most attic window—leaving no trace behind.

"One might almost fancy that some evil genius presided over the ordering of human destinies!" added my friend, as if thinking aloud. "*Who* is content with his fate?—Neither rich nor poor,—neither high nor low!"

"You are the last man on earth to say so, my dear Grove!" cried I. "You, who disdain all aid or change; and would rather be a country curate than the Sublime Sultan!"

"How do you know that?" was his brisk

rejoinder,—either startled out of his habitual reserve by my announcement of our speedy separation, or softened into confidence by the influence of the tranquil twilight around us. "How do you know, that what you take for preference, may not be resignation?—How do you know, that while *you* are overcome by the lassitude and ennui consequent on satiety, Old Matter-of-fact may not be breaking, if not his heart, his head, against his adverse destiny?"

"I could almost fancy you in earnest, Andrew!" said I, a little astonished.

"And so I am!—If it can avail to reconcile you to the obstacles, real or imaginary, in your path,—know, that nothing but the sense of duty to my family actuates my course of study. From my childhood upwards, it has been the pride of those worthy hearts at Wilsbury to see me in orders,—to prepare me for becoming the anchor of their humble faith, and smoothing their way to eternity; and I should consider it a sort of parricide to disappoint their hopes."

"Your vocation, then, is not for the Church?"

"Not as I could wish it to be. Time may settle my opinions. Time, by teaching *me*, may qualify me to become the teacher of others. But in many a weary moment, I almost despair. The absence of all that is ghostly or spiritual in my nature, is a defect hardly to be remedied."

"As far as I am concerned," said I, flippantly, "as the patron of the living in which I hope to see you officiate, I look on what you call a defect, as a first-rate merit. May I never behold one of your evangelical enthusiasts in a pulpit of mine!"

"It was, however, the consciousness of my deficiencies," resumed Andrew, "which caused me to receive your generous proposition concerning your Yorkshire preferment, with a degree of coldness which I trusted you would understand as a negative."

"You really intended, then, at Wilsbury, to refuse the next presentation to the living of Rainham?"

"Only from feeling, my dear Harry, that it is by fulfilling the strict purpose for which my destinies were thrust upon me, I shall ever

reconcile myself to their nature," rejoined he, with some emotion. "As a curate, living within reach of my family, I shall extract out of their veneration for my functions, a sense of dignity with which six times the amount of stipend would never inspire me."

"And if you were released from an obligation which I cannot see in the same light that you do," said I, "what would be the natural course of your ambitions?"

"Cannot the name you were the first to give me, and the nature of the honours I have achieved here, lead you to conjecture?"—inquired he, in an embarrassed tone.

"Don't tell me, Andrew, I beg and beseech of you, that you discern more reality in law or medicine, than in the pulpit!" cried I, hoping to banter out of him the truth of the case.—"Don't make me fancy that you are hankering after pill-boxes or deed-chests!"

"No! I have the vanity to fancy that my mathematical proficiency would be of advantage to me as an engineer."

"As an engineer?" I exclaimed, a little

surprised to find so great a scholar as my friend was already held, derogate from the learned professions.

"Engineering is the predominant science of the day," he rejoined. "Learning has drained dry the Pierian spring, and moral philosophy wrangled the world in and out of its senses. But physical science is in its cradle,—strong and ardent as the infant Hercules, when he strangled the serpents!—Look at the strides we have accomplished since the adoption of steam, and think of those which remain to be measured!—I regard steam as the great civilizer of the modern world, as Christianity of the ancient; a world, too, that doubles the extent of the heathen earth, but of which it has brought the ends together, and the centre to the surface!"—

"In short," said I, "you would prefer being the originator of a railroad, to a pair of lawn sleeves!"—

"You well know, Mr. Powerscourt, that visions of lawn sleeves never disturbed my mind," said Andrew, in a tone of grave reproach. "If I amuse my leisure hours by

planning beacons and diving-bells—and devising means of enclosing the Wash, or draining the Lake of Haarlem—it is only as you resort to the billiard-table,—as a matter of recreation."

Convinced that this allusion to billiards was a retort uncourteous, (for among the fashionable scamps who had ministered to my vanity by their coarse adulation, I had been made to pay dearly for my pretension to be a first-rate player), I puffed out the remainder of my cigar in silence, and made so hasty an exit as not even to conceal my displeasure. Nor, on my way home to Trinity, did I cease from confounding the impudence of Andrew Grove, in venturing —after the offence offered me at Wilsbury, and the resentment testified on my own part at Cambridge, by the withdrawal of my countenance—to play the spy upon my actions.

Long afterwards—*very* long afterwards—I discovered that it was a random hit. Absorbed in his own pursuits, and unaware of my ostracism from the coterie to which my fortune entitled me to belong, Andrew simply concluded me to be a votary of the pursuits in which they

were known to indulge. But I was not likely to forgive his allusion to one of my most signal failures. For I had not only played high, but played detestably.

I frankly admit that "*I* was not likely to forgive,"—because the reader may have discovered by this time that my nature was essentially resentful. As yet, I had pardoned neither the favouritism of my mother,—the girlish tyrannies of my sisters,—nor the flippancies of the lovely girls at Roxborough Elms. Was I likely to overlook the twittings of the drudge of Peter House—the yeoman's son of Wilsbury?—To mark my scorn of his reproof, I was almost capable of realizing my vague menace, and hastily terminating my university career.—But I contented myself with hurrying to the billiard-rooms, which, the preceding day, I had foresworn for ever.

My resolution had, I conclude, transpired; for I was welcomed back as a god-send,—toadied to the top of my bent,—and even allowed to win back fifty of the eleven hundred pounds

of which my besotted vanity and scampish acquaintance had robbed me. Like most men who feel themselves piqued, I was in unnatural spirits.

"I have got an offer for your bay mare, my dear Powerscourt," said Bob Barker, a hanger-on of mine, whose outward man was more brilliant than his inner; and who was good enough to play the same dirty part in my establishment as Whichcote in that of Lord John Jocelyn.

"Thank you.—Forrest has promised me she shall be sound within a month, and I mean to keep her," was my ungracious reply.

"Forrest's 'I promise to cure,' is pretty much like Barker's 'I promise to pay,'" observed Hetton of Bennett's—whose queue seemed to burn in his hand the moment I entered the room. "In your place, Powerscourt, I wouldn't refuse a good offer."

"And what do you call a good offer?"

"William Grieve will give you forty pounds, in a bill at three months."

"Forty pounds,—for a mare for which I

paid two hundred guineas to Elmore three months ago, and who has slightly strained her shoulder!"

"I told you it was no go,—I told you he wouldn't hear of it!" was audibly whispered to my friend Barker, by one of the standers-by. To which followed another whisper, wherein the words "hard-up" were sufficiently audible.

"Just like one of Whichcote's impudent inventions!" retorted Barker, evidently intending me to overhear him. And when his purpose was accomplished, by my asking an explanation, he equivocated, and hedged off, so as to force me to insist.

"Where is the good of repeating any thing after Whichcote, my dear fellow?" said my friend Bob. "Not a man in Cambridge would take his word for a bushel of chaff!—We all know he has got some private spite against you; and when a fellow goes the length of reporting, in the first place, that though in the enjoyment of some thousands a-year, you were the meanest dog alive, and left your mother and sisters, who are dependent upon you, to live on

cheese-parings; and next, that your fine fortune is a mere bubble—and that you have got a few thousand pounds advanced you to make a splash, on the strength of a will made in your favour by an old lunatic, which is about to be set aside by his heir-at-law, so that you will have to refund in no time, which is what makes you, he says, so confounded a screw, —we all know how to understand him."

"I am a screw, then, am I?" said I, endeavouring to laugh.

"Not that *I* ever saw!" replied Bob Barker. "But such is the impression given by Whichcote,—who has some influence in Cambridge, and is supposed to have known you from your childhood. *His* account of you, previous to your arrival, was, that you were the stingiest fellow on earth!"

On announcing my instant determination to require explanations of Whichcote, every man present of course retracted. No one had heard a word against me—no one had *said* a word against me: cases where it is against the general interest to get up a duel having the

marvellous faculty of enabling all parties to scramble out of a dirty business with the cleanest of hands.

The only dupe in the affair, however, was myself. For in the weakness of my vanity and inexperience, I judged it necessary to double my usual stakes that night,—and consequently my usual losses; besides throwing away, at a fifth of her value, an animal which was the pride of my stud: by which excess of idiotism, I fancied I had earned an especial right to bite my thumb at the traitor Whichcote the first time we jostled in the street.

One only useful piece of information reached me in the course of my squabble.

"I knew the 'disputed will' chapter of the story to be mere brag!" was the observation of Hetton, in the course of the argument. "For Frank Halliwell told me that his tutor, Temple of King's, had relations in your part of the country, and declared your family and fortune to be unimpeachable."

"Temple?" said I,—my mind involuntarily reverting to Wrottesley Rectory and its gentle-

manly incumbent. "The parson of my parish is named Temple."

"Then *our* Temple is probably his son. He looks as if he had been born and bred in a vestry!" cried Bob Barker, shrugging his shoulders.

"A gentlemanly man enough, for all that!" added Hetton; "and one of the best scholars of the university."

"In that case, certainly not the son of *my* Dr. Temple," I rejoined, "who is little more than forty years of age."

"I remember hearing some story, when first I came to college," resumed Hetton, "before Temple dreamt of a tutorship, that he was engaged to be married to a girl of good family, whose relations would not hear of the match; and that he was reading for orders with the promise of a living from some old man in the north."

"What signifies!" interrupted Bob Barker, —who was in haste to get me to the table. "The history of all these black coats is the same: perpetually on the cant, with their

mouths wide open, for the chance of whatever loaves and fishes may fall in their way!"

But though as well content as himself at that moment to drop the subject, it had taken possession of my fancy. To one so self-consequential as I was, no man who had warmly taken his part—more especially with little chance that the championship would reach my ears—could remain an object of indifference. Through Hetton's means, I had little difficulty in making Temple's acquaintance; and as little in ascertaining that he was a younger brother of the man whose bread I had recently broken.

But albeit my advances towards him were twice as cordial as they would have been to any other man in the university, Temple received them with provoking reserve. In spite of the gravity of his functions, he was little more than six-and-twenty; strikingly good-looking; and in manners and appearance, a perfect gentleman. Nothing in him of the pomposities of the buzz-wig and mitre in perspective, to account for his coldness. He listened with an air of pleasure to my tribute to his brother's merits. But the

moment I attempted to speak of himself, or of his visits to Wrottesley Rectory and acquaintance with my country neighbours, his nature froze again.—Like the pictures painted in sympathetic colours, which, when withdrawn from the fire, suddenly transform their summer greeneries into a landscape all frost and snow,—the change was chilling.

Conceiving that I had done the young tutor some honour in seeking his acquaintance, I was out of all patience with the distance at which he pretended to hold me. Was *he*, too, of the Jocelyn and Whichcote faction?—Or had he the impertinence to fancy that, because his brother held his living from my predecessor, there was no obligation of courtesy due to the owner of the advowson?—Or, in his province as pedagogue, did he pretend to disapprove the company I frequented, and the dissolute habits I was adopting?

The prepossession with which his intelligent countenance and gentle manners had at first sight inspired me, soon gave way therefore to my customary resentment. On Dr. Temple's

brother, I felt that I had certain claims.—What, it might have puzzled me to explain. But from the deportment I adopted towards him, he could have little difficulty in interpreting my displeasure.

Alas! I soon afforded him equally good grounds for estimating the purse-proud meanness of my nature.—The next time I accidentally found myself in his company, I took occasion to speak of the livings of which I was patron.

"Wrottesley, I trust, will not fall vacant in my life-time," said I, affecting to address the compliment to himself. "But of Rainham, which is worth a thousand a-year, the incumbent is seventy-six!—But I give him leave to jog on a few years nearer towards fourscore: the friend for whom I intend it, not being yet in orders."

I said all this, hoping to make the poor tutor's mouth water, and teach him to be more civil to one with such capital preferment in his gift. Instead of which, he suddenly grew white

as death,—probably from suppressed rage, at hearing the dignity of his cloth so unceremoniously dealt with. So far from amending his incivility, from that day forward, he scarcely returned my bow!—

CHAPTER IX.

When the Sun confided the guidance of his chariot to Phæton,—'Don't soar too high,' said he: 'you will set the skies on fire. But don't sink too low, or you will reduce the earth to ashes.'

MONTESQUIEU.

PROFESSIONAL men are fond of recurring to their college life; ejaculating with the madrigalist,

> Oh! the merry days—
> The merry days when I was young!

inasmuch as the days of their grave maturity are any thing but merry.—But a man whose fate it is to walk in the sunshine of the world, is apt to look back with pity to the shallow pretence at manly virtue or manly vice which strutted under his cap and gown. Drunken brawls, break-neck exploits on broken-down

hunters, and the jarring of empty braggartry between fools who, if

Men are but children of a larger growth,

are the most froward of overgrown children, occupy at least three-fourths of the time supposed to be devoted to the cultivation of divine philosophy by such fellow-commoners as, like myself, rejoice in empty heads and pockets overflowing.

Not that nature had predestined me for a blockhead. At Eagle House, I was always beforehand with my class; and had it been my fate to be cheered on in my studies by father, uncle, or guardian, or any other individual dignified by broad-cloth and beaver, I might have turned out a scholar of decent note.—But at Hentsfield, my classics and dirty boots were lumped together as nuisances; scholarship being accounted by my mother and sisters a disease of boyhood of the measles-and-hooping-cough order, which it was to be hoped I should take kindly and get through without giving too much trouble.

There was not enough of the genius in me to resent their want of enlightenment; and as my chosen companions were for the most part dashing dunces, who knew nothing but what they guessed, and whose only art was that of concealing their ignorance, my utmost ambition at college was to scramble through my terms disgracing myself as little, and enjoying myself as much as possible. When, therefore, I found my object defeated of forming the brilliant connections I had read and dreamed of, I had no nobler resource to fall back upon.

By good luck, however, my vices served me better than my virtues. The resentments fretting within me having flung me—precisely as was foreseen by Bob Barker and Co.—into a course of dissipation where deep drinking and deep dicing afforded an excitement outblazing even the heat of my wrath, I found myself, on the eve of the expiration of my first term, as deeply in debt as in dudgeon.—My liabilities, indeed, were such as might easily have been accommodated by bills: both Barker and Hetton, and others of their clique, being chiefly

intent on keeping me in their clutches. But something of my father's son glowed just then in my veins, suggesting that, with such a fortune as mine, the imputation of debt was unpardonable; and that although any explanation of my situation to Messrs. Gripham and Klose would lay me under obligations to them I should infallibly repent hereafter, my guardian, however dissatisfied with my conduct, would deal with me like a gentleman.

I addressed myself, therefore, at once to Sir Robert Hawley, and, pleading frankly guilty, requested the advance of four thousand pounds: —offering my word of honour that this first excess should be the last; and announcing my intention of quitting Cambridge.

"This resolution will at least satisfy the old gentleman," thought I, "that my folly is not likely to be renewed. He will indulge in such an explosion of wrath as gouty guardians usually exhibit on such occasions; and bid me 'go and sin no more.'"

Neither his gout nor his guardianship, however, sufficed to betray the precise old gentleman

out of his systematic habits of propriety. Sir Robert simply presented his compliments to me, enclosed me an order on the Bank of England for five instead of four thousand pounds; expressing the most implicit reliance on the sacred pledge I had given to confine myself for the future within my allowance; but stating that even that allowance would be withdrawn if I persisted in my intention of prematurely quitting the university. Stiff as was the phrasing of his letter, he expressed a hope, at the conclusion, that I would set apart a week of the vacation to visit him at Hawley Chase, as soon as he returned from Buxton.

The amazement of my billiard-room gang—(poisonous parasites, deleterious as the night-shade!)—at my unexpected command of money, scarcely exceeded my own. From the moment a load of debt encumbered my shoulders, I had begun to feel as beggarly in my own esteem, as in my more abject days of Eagle House; and as I took care to keep to myself the origin of my sudden relief, not one of them but believed that one of the others had settled my business

by an introduction to the Jews. This surmise produced a schism in the confederation; amidst the wranglings of which, their hold upon their victim relaxed.

Meanwhile, the additional thousand pounds so magnanimously vouchsafed by the old gentleman as if to seal the bond of my obligation, fulfilled the purpose for which he probably intended it,—of enabling me to start for home: fearing neither to face those I left behind, nor those I was about to greet!—

The thought of Hentsfield had not troubled me much during my six months' absence. My mother and sisters had so long accustomed me to a want of all solicitude during my half-yearly schooling, that it was not likely their sudden accession of interest in my favour should be instantaneously reciprocal.—But on arriving among them, it would have been at variance with the impulses of frail human nature not to feel a little amused at perceiving how thoroughly the tables were turned. I, who had formerly been Gulliver in Brobdignag, was now Gulliver in Lilliput!—My poor old green room was

disfigured by a French paper *à la Watteau.* A suite of sham-ancient steam-carved furniture replaced my straw chairs and painted washing-stand; and my clean white dimity hangings were exchanged for bargain-shop damask!—

Beside my arm-chair lay a showy footstool, which I afterwards found to be a specimen of Dora's embroidery; while a Turkish cushion on the settee was furnished by the needle of Emily.

"You have had visitors at Hentsfield then, during my absence?" said I, looking with unfeigned disgust at all this new-fangled finery.

"Visitors?" reiterated my mother, not understanding that I chose to consider it impossible these demonstrations should have been made solely in my favour.

"Or you are perhaps expecting some," I continued, "to gratify whose taste you have put my poor comfortable old den so thoroughly to the blush!—In that case, you should have apprized me, mother; for my coming here even for the few days I shall be able to stay, will probably prove inconvenient!"

"Only a few days?" cried my mother, too

much aghast to explain that the gauds around me were dedicated to my exclusive use. "I thought the vacation lasted till October?"

"And surely you told us," added Dora, "that you had no intention of taking up your abode at Wrottesley till you attained your majority?"

"Not the slightest. But I have visits to pay in Yorkshire that will occupy a portion of my time. I shall travel during the remainder."

"But, my dear Wrottesley," cried Dora—(for since my accession of fortune, 'Harry' was dropped in the family)—we have been making all sorts of engagements for you!"—

"Fishing parties to Luton and Brocket,—which it will be *such* a disappointment to our friends if you do not join!"—added Dora.

"I have been accustomed to see them resign themselves with great patience to the want of my company on such occasions," said I, with a significant smile.

"With those to whom we allude, you are not even acquainted," rejoined my elder sister.—"The Stormonts have proved a great addition to our neighbourhood."

"If you allude to the people who live at a fine old Grange near Berkhampstead,—the family having resided in the county for the last three centuries, and the present Sir Thomas Stormont ever since he was born,—I scarcely know how you can call them an addition to the neighbourhood."

"I should have said, perhaps, to our acquaintance. We have seen a great deal of them lately."

"And do you mean, mother," cried I, turning with indignation to the head of the family, "that you have stooped to receive attentions from those who have been insulting you by their neglect for the last dozen years; and who now condescend to notice you only because your son has become a man of fortune, and they have a batch of ugly daughters to dispose of?"

"Lady Stormont has never been on terms with the Whichcotes," observed Emily, stepping in with an olive-branch; "and our intimacy at Barming rendered it impossible for her to seek our acquaintance."

"But the moment the Whichcotes saw fit to

resent Dora's dismissal of George," added Emily, "the Stormonts took the first opportunity to ask an introduction."

"Mr. Stormont has repeatedly told us," rejoined her sister, "that the Whichcotes had been the only obstacle."

"There is a *Mr.* Stormont in the case, is there?" said I,—for though a feud with the Whichcote tribe was a tolerably certain passport to my good will, these sudden advances were suspicious.

"Yes: a nephew of Sir Thomas's,—a very charming young man, who is to succeed to his title"—

"And, as in duty of kinsmanship bound, marry one of the daughters, I suppose," said I.

"Oh dear, no!—A marriage between cousins is such a fatal bar to all family connection!" cried my elder sister. "But I assure you, Wrottesley, you will find Reginald Stormont a most superior young man; and it will disappoint us all sadly if you start for Yorkshire before the acquaintance is made."

"The truth is, my dear boy," observed my

mother, the first time we were alone together, "young Stormont is making up to Dora. On his return from his travels, he came down to stay at his uncle's; and having accidentally met your sister, made such representations to the family, that it was *he* who brought about the acquaintance."

"I suspect," was still my ungracious rejoinder, "that it would have been long enough in bringing about, but for the existence of such a spot of earth as Wrottesley Hall."

"Perhaps so!" gravely replied my mother.—"I dare say our connection with so distinguished a member of the landed gentry of England as the late Mr. Wrottesley, is not without its influence on the Stormonts. For you seem to overlook the fact, my dear boy, that your sisters are as nearly allied to him as yourself."—

"*He* seems to have overlooked it,—which is far more to the purpose!" said I, with a laugh which, I fear, was a little triumphant. For my mother instantly endeavoured to lower my tone.

"Hush, Harry!—Hush, my dear Wrottesley!" cried she.—"There is really no occasion

for letting the whole household, and through them the whole county, into our family secrets. As there was every reason that the old gentleman *should* have made some addition to the slender fortunes of your sisters, let them at least enjoy the benefit of the doubt which the world seems to entertain on the subject."

I understood all now;—the fishing parties, and pic-nics, and tardy attentions of the Stormonts!—But though fully intending to make a liberal provision for my mother and sisters as soon as the attainment of my majority rendered me the unshackled master of my property, I was neither Christian nor philosopher enough to forego meanwhile my petty vengeance.

"I did not choose," I informed my lady-mother, "to connive in what so nearly resembled imposition."—And lo! on the eve of a grand dinner-party—offered by the Grange to Hentsfield, for the sole purpose of a general introduction,—I found it convenient to start for Yorkshire.

The first time I was conscious of feeling my mind expand beyond the paltry narrowness into

which it had been contracted by a mean education and want of sympathy in my family, was in that northward journey.—For the first time, I contemplated the thriving, cheering aspect of our well-cultivated kingdom, with the pride and glory of a proprietor of the soil.

In winter-time,—Wilsbury be my witness,—the rural is an unsavoury thing. Leafless woods and miry ways are associated with the notion of want, disease, and wretchedness; the scanty meal—the shuddering ague;—and not a thatched roof but brings with it associations of soup-tickets and gratuitous sacks of coals. But at the season when the earth is pleased to open her veins of milk and honey, and the fruit-crowned face of plenty peeps like that of a hamadryad from every green thicket,—when even the "long dun wolds," instead of being "ribbed with snow," are attired in robes of verdant velvet, pranked with purple and gold by the blossoming of gorse and heather,—the cheerful thrifty villages afford a pleasant interlude between the stateliness of our sweeping parks and shrubbiness of our cozy villas. The

sturdy air of the peasantry—the busy centralization of the manufacturing towns—the compactness and subordination of every homestead, from the stirring farm to the lordly hall with its wings and plantations,—combined to inspire me with a certain glow of heart, which those who delight in high-sounding words are apt to call patriotism.

By the time I caught sight of the imposing façade of Wrottesley Hall, developed amid the noble verdure of the fine old woods, I had not only adopted Andrew Grove's opinion, that my stake in the country was well worth the sacrifice of a couple of years of my bootless leisure to set my mind in order for the task of legislation; but had literally forgotten that I was making my *debut* in the most perfect new britska that ever followed the rattling pace of four north-road posters, ere posting became a thing of tradition.

The aspect of my property was scarcely less improved than my equipage. As yet unaware what price my friend Gripham might place upon his labours, I wasted a world of eulogistic

interjections on his zeal. It was amazing what had been done for the place. Though the repairs purported to be no more than the needful, the mere restoration of light and air to the much-abused premises, by the unblocking of windows and opening of doors, — the mere assigning of things to their proper places, and removing all that was irrelevant and unsightly, —imparted an air of dignity, airiness, and prosperity to the grand old mansion, which was rejoicing to look on.

The beauty of the season, the richness of the shrubberies, which *would* expand and blossom in spite of the deficiency of gardeners,— and, above all, the buoyancy of the summer air, which, laden with a thousand fragrances, breathed so wooingly through the open windows, —excluded the sense of loneliness so apt to beset an uninhabited house. Winter demands the stir of a sufficient establishment;—fires on scores of hearths, and blazing lights in every corridor.—But short nights and the sunshine of lengthened days reconcile one to solitude; and

old Nicholls, whom, with Sir Robert's sanction, I had long since installed as major-domo, had taken care that the wing selected for my use should be in such order, that my college chambers, with all their lounging chairs, gun-racks, whip-stands, cigar-cellarets, and horde of noisy guests, were far less cheerful and cheering.

On the morrow, I was up at day-break, for the first time since the auspicious dawn which found me philosophizing over my meagre prospects at Hentsfield; and now, when I threw open the windows, and felt that the incense which rose into my chamber was emitted by my own garden-grounds, and that through the rich expanse of hill and dale on which I was gazing,

I was lord of the fowl and the brute,—

that one of my keepers was unmooring the boat in the boat-house, in case I fulfilled my project of fishing, and another preparing for my expedition to a warren a couple of miles off, but still my "own own," while a third awaited my arrival at the pheasantry for the examination of his

stock,—my emotions strongly resembled those of Christopher Sly!—

Upon my soul, I am a lord indeed!

were words which, if they did not actually escape my lips, contained the very moral of my feelings.

"I could be content to spend a week or two here in perfect retirement," was my next reflection. "The worst of it is, these Yorkshire squires, with their proverbial hospitality, will be for wrenching me out of house and home to enjoy every body's cheer but my own. Dr. Temple will be at me before the day is over; and Roxborough Elms offer itself as my wash-pot. But what I most dread is the strife of county politics!—Till my principles are known, (which there can be no immediate necessity for declaring,) Lord Meadowley will be wooing me for the liberal party; while the Tory tribe will throw open in my favour the rusty old gates of Courtfield Manor;—and how one loathes the thoughts of a hecatomb in July—turtle, venison, toasts, and sentiments! Even a greater bore,

however, might be endured for the satisfaction of gazing on such a landscape as this, and knowing oneself to be monarch of all one surveys!"

A glimpse at London on my way (*par ricochet*) from Cambridge to Hentsfield—London in the dog-days—dusty, sultry, noisy, and fetid,—London, viewed from the vulgar publicity of a flash hotel, where a renewal of the gin-punch and chicken hazard of college life avouched a total want of connection with the more refined pleasures of the *beau monde*,—had put me wonderfully in conceit with the beauties of nature. Destitute of the thousand golden ties which render the capital delightful, unable to fall, like Lord John Jocelyn, at once into a specific niche in the polished temple of society such as confers an interest on public life and a charm on private, my soul sickened at the brick-faced Babylon, in whose interminable suburbs trees are daily cut down in order that houses may be planted.

As yet, my senses were undeluded by the hatchi-like intoxication which serves to conceal so much that is loathsome—so much that is

disgraceful,—so much that is heart-rending, beneath the gay drapery of the spangled mantle of Fashion :

Das Gemiſch von Koth und Feuer,

as it is called by Goethe,—that bold taker in vain of the name of any false God!

But though charmed for a moment by the beauty of Wrottesley, my heart was not yet ripe for deeply-felt enjoyment of its solitudes.—The seed which had fallen on a rock, sprang up, but soon withered. Before two days were at an end, the pleasure of seeing gave place to the desire of being seen. It seemed impossible but that so grand an event as my arrival in my britska and four, must be known in the neighbourhood. On the former occasion, it had transpired, as by electric telegraph; and I was too vain to take into the account that, at *that* moment, Wrottesley Hall was a point of general interest from containing the ashes of its deceased Phœnix as well as his embryo successor.

On the third day, I began to find old Nicholls, who followed me about the house, prattling with the affectionate doting of old Adam, the

attendant of Orlando de Boys, all but insupportable. Fishing, with no one but the keepers to admire the skill of my angle, or weight of my trout, was a sorry recreation; and while producing a marvellous mortality among the rabbits, the vertical summer sun was nearly the death of myself. Even the satisfaction of a cigar puffed into the face of nature under my own portico, seemed to require companionship to give it zest; and I was falling rapidly the victim of a galloping fit of the spleen, when lo! the sight of Gripham's odious buggy driving up the grand approach with an air of proprietorship, arguing that there were two Kings in Brentford, roused me from my weariness of spirit.

The recollection of the malicious report spread at Cambridge by Whichcote concerning the disputed will, applied a spur to my side; and I assumed an air as dignified as was compatible with a shooting-jacket and straw hat, to make the attorney sensible that my announcement of being glad to see him was a phrase as purely conventional as that which apprizes a

condemned criminal that it is "His Majesty's pleasure" he shall be hanged.

But no effort was necessary to keep him at becoming distance. His manner was even more studiedly cold than I would desire; for there lurked within his cunning eye indications of repressed merriment, as though he were making game of me at heart.

He did not even relax into an open smile when I complimented him, and sincerely, on the altered aspect of the place.

"There has been no great difficulty," he stiffly replied, "in replacing things in their original state:—I mean, Sir, in the state they were before the mind of my late client became so unfortunately disordered."

This sounded horribly like confirmation of Whichcote's report!—But how was I to summon courage to ascertain by a direct question whether it purported a threat. With rising colour and quickened respiration, I took a fresh weed from my cigar-case, to exonerate myself from further comments during the remainder of our survey of the premises.

For the world then dated its era A.D. 1820. And if, in George the Third and Sir Joshua's time, those who wanted to turn a deaf ear to a troublesome companion,

> Shifted their trumpet, and only took snuff,

in that of his royal successor, tobacco assumed another form of popularity and usefulness.

Even then, as at the present day, a fashionable young man considered it a warrant for incivility to have a cigar in his mouth.

CHAPTER X.

I dream'd I lay where flowers were springing
Gaily in the sunny gleam,
Listening to the wild birds singing
By a falling crystal stream:
Straight the sky grew black and daring,
Through the woods the wirlwinds rave,
Trees with aged arms were warring
Wi' the swelling drumlie wave.
Such my life's deceitful morning,
Such the pleasure I enjoy'd;
But long ere noon loud tempests storming,
A' my flowing bliss destroy'd.

BURNS.

SATISFIED that Gripham's visit must have circulated the news of my residence at Wrottesley, I could no longer mistake the neglect of my neighbours for less than premeditated insult; and my indignation waxed as hot as became the wounded susceptibility of irascible nineteen. I

absented myself from divine service the following Sabbath, lest the Rector should appropriate to himself the token of deference due to his Maker. As to Sir Gratian, I deserved to become the sport of *his* unmannerly caprice for having suffered myself to be so summarily disposed of by him and his, at my last visit to Yorkshire.

It was neither my desire to look again on the pretty faces of Adela and her sister, however, nor a longing after the cheerful chat and ready hospitality of Dr. Temple, that caused me to wander over my domain with my hands stuck in my shooting-jacket pockets instead of holding either rod or gun.

It was the cause, it was the cause, my soul!

If my presentiments told truth, mischief was brewing against me within the deed-chests of attorneys and equally iron knowledge-boxes of counsel learned in the law. My busy fancy presented old Wrottesley's will before my eyes, grown so diaphanous and tindery that not a clause would hold together. And I, who, amid my college discomfitures, had sometimes been

ass enough to fancy that much coin had brought much care, and that I might perhaps have been a happier man if left to scramble through life as my father had done before me, exposed to the ignominious patronage of Whichcotes of Barming, and brother-in-lawship with a captain of lancers, had my eyes opened at once to the enjoyments included in the pride, pomp, and circumstance of my position, while gazing upon my glorious avenues, with the apprehension that a time was coming when they might be mine no longer.

I suppose it was this vague terror uppermost in my mind which took me sauntering, day after day, on my shooting pony, across every farm and through every woodland on the estate.—There was one particular road along the shrubby river-side, which I had made up my mind to avoid as bordering on the property of Sir Gratian. But a certain degree of curiosity to see how the cliffs which rose almost perpendicularly from the eastward side of the stream, and which in winter might have been mistaken for the ram-

parts of a fortress, were looking, now that summer had called into exuberance the shrubs enrooted in their fissures and suspended from every cleft some flowery pennant,—directed my steps, or rather, the amble of my pony, almost involuntarily towards the spot.

And what a spot!—How gracious to the eye —how emollient to the temper! Why do we pore over pages of poetry, in tongues living or dead, to acquire a jargon about vernal bowers or crystal streams, when such volumes lie open around us, supplying the animated type from whence those pale and languid copies of nature are derived!—What poet of Greece or Italy ever vivified his landscapes by the power of genius, like the faint ripple of the living waters,—the skimming of the swallow over their surface, —or the cry of the bittern winging its sullen way to the distant marsh?—

Above all, why post like mad to Vaucluse or Vallombrosa, or peregrinate the Pyrennean or Alpine wilds, while such delicious scenery as my own Wheledale lie scattered among our native

hills!—I am ready to swear that had that quiet valley, with its gushing stream, bordered here and there by groups of solitary ash or elm trees stationed at intervals like gigantic sentinels to guard the defile,—the towering rocks excluding or admitting, according to the windings of the stream, the slanting evening sunshine, which, every now and then, some indenture or angle permitted to peep down into the valley and gild up patches of fern and furze as if in derision of the soberer verdure of the rest;—had it been pourtrayed, I say, by Wouverman, Rubens or Karl du Jardin, with an iron-grey horse or two in the foreground, backed by lumpish cavaliers, much resembling my uncle Toby, and called a hawking party, the mere picture of its beauties would be bought up at a hundred pounds an inch by some *dilettante* Marquis, or Bristol M.P., to be exhibited among the ancient masters at the British Institution, and make the mouth of the National Gallery water.

It was not a hawking party, however, that I descried on the golden evening in July, when I

found my pony straying beside the stream, as though the murmur of the waters among the pebbles "made music to its lonely ear," after a morning when the thermometer stood at 88° in the shade. As far as the distance enabled me to discern, the group which had taken possession of a solitude, the exclusive property of Henry Wrottesley Powerscourt Wrottesley, Esq., consisted of two fair equestrians and a most unfair pedestrian: for though he sauntered between them, (when even the intrusion of the elm and ash-trees into the midst of a road, which consisted of one pennyworth of shingle to a monstrous quantity of turf, enabled them to proceed three abreast,) his attentions were wholly directed "over the left." Whomsoever might be the right hand lady, she was shamefully set at nought!—

It was, perhaps, my perception of this, and the conviction that every riding party containing two ladies ought to be a *partie carrée*, which decided me to prick on. But I had not proceeded many paces, at a rate doubling my wonted speed, before I descried that the fair

Amazons were no other than Adela and Caroline; ay,—Adela and Caroline Roxborough caught trespassing on my grounds!—

What business had they there at such a time?

Had they been alone, I suppose I should have—not put spurs to my shooting pony, for I was riding in shooting shoes;—but made the best of my way to join them. But the third individual was a puzzler.—It was not Sir Gratian. Oh no, decidedly, it was not Sir Gratian; who would have distributed his paternal attentions with greater integrity. The fellow's step, moreover, was too elastic for the gouty toe of the old Baronet. He walked as though he trod on fleecy clouds, and lived on ether. He walked, (God save the mark!) as though, being the companion of angels, he were the happiest of men!—

I was exceedingly indignant; first, because those who chose to give no sign of their cognizance of my existence, were making themselves thus strangely at home on the soil of which I

was lord; and secondly, that any thing wearing broad-cloth should presume to whisper so closely into the ear of Caroline Roxborough. I did not, however, advance and bring them to the shame they so richly deserved; but skulked stealthily at a distance, taking sights at them as cunningly as a Kentuckian, having his rifle on his shoulder and deadly enmity at heart.

But what was my surprise and disgust when, a sudden turn of the road, bringing me in ambush behind the bole of a vast oak tree and the party before me into profile, apprized me that the happy man, the key-note of the trio, was no other than—Henry Temple!

Then rushed into my mind all I had heard at Cambridge of the young tutor's marriage engagement and prospects of preferment; and, pellucid as was the stream on whose margin I was "mooning" and pleasant its murmur, I would fain have had it deep, strong, and turbid, that I might have flung into its waters the presumptuous mortal who, it instantly occurred to me, must be the affianced lover of

Caroline. Nay, I am not sure that I did not wish the traitress herself engulphed with her black-coated Amadis.

But I was now less than ever inclined to place myself within ken of the party; and as they were approaching the spot where the beautiful stream issued from the base of the cliffs as by a subterranean tunnel, on the borders of Sir Gratian's property so that ten minutes more would carry them off my grounds, I was not sorry to find a shrubby nook within an angle of the cliffs, where I could lie *perdu* till they were out of sight.

Another moment, and the movements of the trio convinced me that their meeting was a clandestine one, and that the young ladies had not been escorted by their sable knight from their father's house. For on approaching the confines of the valley, they reined up, for the manifest purpose of leave-taking. And a tolerably tender leave-taking it was!—Though the happy couple had no reason to suppose themselves overlooked by anything but the jackdaws winging the noisy

circles of their evening flight near the shrubby summit of the cliffs, they really might have been less demonstrative; and so overcome was I by the startle of finding myself the unsuspected witness of such a scene, that Henry Temple had seen the last of his love, and nearly reached the spot where my pony was munching the young osier shoots, before I became conscious of the awkwardness of my position.

Lest he should fancy me absorbed by emotions of a tender nature, I resolved to address him cavalierly as he passed; and either banter him on what I had witnessed, or pretend to have seen nothing, according to the mood in which I found him. But when he came within hail of me, instead of evincing either surprise or embarrassment, he simply lifted his hat with an air of chilling defiance, that plainly indicated—"Speak to me if you dare!"—

I did *not* dare. I felt too thoroughly ashamed of being caught in a seeming act of espial, to find courage for accosting a man nearly ten years my senior in age, and twenty in endow-

ments and self-possession. But by the road taken by Henry Temple on emerging from the valley, through the windings of which I had much ado to keep my pony at so respectful a distance as to avoid the appearance of forcing my company upon him, I saw that he was staying at the Rectory.

This might account for the Rector's incivility —just as the Cambridge tutor's intimacy with Roxborough Elms might account for the holding back of Sir Gratian. For with all my self-complacency, there was no concealing the fact that, short as was my college career, it had done me little credit. I had lived among knaves, and conducted myself like a fool.

But it was not till I came within view of the vast frontage of Wrottesley Hall, which looked to me at that moment as lonely as an enchanted castle in a fairy tale, that I became fully aware of the pangs I was enduring, or of the motives which had brought me in such a hurry back to Yorkshire!—

I had never said to myself in plain English

and the honesty of my heart, "Caroline Roxborough, with her graceful serenity and meekness, is the very companion in life for a selfish, consequential braggart like yourself. Your inexperience may have led your boyhood into the mistake of over-estimating the rustic family of a friend whom education had accomplished; or the force of example induced you, at Cambridge, to dive into the mud of vicious enjoyment, and imagine you could fish up Orient pearl. But the Caroline thrown by Providence in your worthless way, would, if perseveringly wooed and won, secure the happiness of your life." But now, I saw that such had been my secret conviction;—that it was the prospect of re-admission to the Elms which had caused me to turn with indifference from the pastimes of London, and break with so little ceremony the not unpromising engagements of Hentsfield. And in the exasperation of my disappointment, I fancied myself as completely jilted as if Caroline had seriously encouraged my homage, and Henry Temple been the newer acquaintance!—

But now that the spirit, good or evil, was roused within me, I no longer hesitated about the line of conduct to be adopted towards the Elms. Sir Gratian had given me a warm general invitation to his house, and might take the consequences. I had been prevented making the initiative visit only by the dread of a cold reception. As matters stood, what signified whether the family were displeased or not?

On the morrow, therefore, I rode over; resolved to apprize the adventuresome damsels who made so free with my domain, (if indeed Henry Temple had not frustrated the information,) that I was thoroughly in their secret.

"Sir Gratian has been in town for the last fortnight, Sir, and in his absence the young ladies do not receive company," was the formal answer of the jolly old butler, who seemed vexed to be obliged to send me from the door.

Not receive company, forsooth, during their father's absence!—So, so, so!—Such then was probably the origin of their unmaidenly rendezvous on the enemy's ground!—

"But my master is expected back this afternoon, or to-morrow morning, Sir," added the hospitable Corkscrew, to whom I had made no audible answer. And I was about to give him my card to be transmitted to the old gentleman on his return, when lo! a sound of wheels on the gravel, accompanied by the ill-measured stepping of post-horses; and before I had time to get out of the way, the exclamation of the red-nosed functionary of the ale-cellar apprized me that "master" was beforehand with his calculations—that Sir Gratian was come.

It was not any sort of misgiving as to the reception likely to be afforded me which at that moment brought so vivid a colour to my cheek. I was blushing for the lumbering build of my Liquorpond Street britska, as revealed by force of contrast with the light, easy, well-hung, well-finished barouche in which the quizzical old Yorkshire Baronet made his appearance. Within it, by his side, sat an individual as neat as the carriage; whom I should naturally have concluded to be his son Charley, but that, con-

necting the turf pursuits of that well-known sportsman with his Roxborough origin, my mind's eye had always figured him to itself in a Newmarket cutaway and knowing tile, with cords, and tops,—the type of flash sportsmanship and slang. Whereas the stranger who held back while Sir Gratian hallooed across him to bid me a hearty welcome, was calm, gentlemanly, and grave of habit as a court physician.

"By Jove! this is being in luck, my dear Wrottesley!" cried Sir Gratian. "Five minutes later, and we might have missed you.—I hadn't an item of a notion you would be in the country before Sir Robert returned from Buxton.—But so much the better, my lad,—so much the better!—Here's my son on tenterhooks to make your acquaintance. Charley, my dear boy, Mr. Wrottesley Powerscourt!"

Instead of evincing any symptoms of tenterhooks, when the postboy rose in his stirrups to denote that he was at his journey's end, Mr. Roxborough formally raised his hat. But his ceremonious deportment was only in harmony

with his plain dress and cold though handsome countenance; nor did I for a moment fancy my new acquaintance uncivil. I only wondered what could have given so mere a piece of mechanism a sporting turn, or Sir Gratian a son so courtly.

"I shall do myself the honour of waiting upon you and Mr. Roxborough to-morrow, Sir Gratian," said I, turning my horse's head to be off, with the painful certainty that the Newmarket man's eye was fixed upon my horse with an air of compassion towards so ostensible a proof of my greenness. And at that moment, though the brute had cost me a hundred and fifty guineas only two months before, I heartily wished that it were feeding the crows of Whele-dale.

Away I went, turning a deaf ear to Sir Gratian's entreaties that I would not make a stranger of his son, with whom he hoped to see me the best of friends, but stay and dine with them at once; and a deliberation, graver than the deepest of my academic studies ever produced, did it cost me to determine, when the morrow

came, in what guise to produce the most stunning impression on this fashionable automaton. Resolved to convince him that I was quite as well up to the time of day as himself, I made my appearance attired according to the exaggerated cut of vulgar dandyism prevalent at the universities; and probably astonished him twice as much as I intended.

Had Sir Gratian Roxborough been capable of a sustained effort even in a practical joke, I should certainly have fancied myself hoaxed; and that some milksop lord, perhaps some humble scholar or poor relative of the family, was imposed upon me as the fashionable Charles. So mild were his manners and so deferential his deportment towards his sisters, that I, who since I came to man's and the Wrottesley estate, had begun to treat mine as my father may have done his subalterns, or Abdel Kader his Moors, could scarcely believe in his identity with the owner of the famous "Titan," "Marmaduke," and "Miss Jenny!"—

For it was not solely on Sir Gratian's own

showing, or Dr. Temple's detractions, I had formed my opinion of young Roxborough. "Bell's Life in London," and the "Sporting Magazine," yielded confirmation strong as proofs of unholy writ, that though his whiskers were still limp and his brow as white as ivory, he had lost the Oaks with Marmaduke, and won the Paris steeple-chase with Miss Jenny; to say nothing of being crack rider with the Pytchley and Atherstone during successive winters; while the "Morning Post" announced his dining one day at Berwick House in the same party with Highnesses, Royal and Serene; and the next at Greenwich, with the opera-dancers most in repute and disrepute. Whichcote, too, was constantly quoting him as "my friend Charley Roxborough";—an epithet Whichcote was seldom heard to apply except to some very great man of whom he knew nothing.

But what more stupid than to imagine that, in these our times, a man may be foreseen and forethought by means of his calling, like a porter by his ticket, a cabman by his badge, or a hero

by his order of the Bath!—Before I had been ten minutes in the well-remembered old drawing-room at the Elms, tremblingly conscious of my proximity to Car and Adela whom I had not courage to look in the face, I heard Mr. Roxborough whisper to his sister—"You need not wait dinner for the Archdeacon, my dear Caroline;—the haunch will be spoiled, for the Archdeacon is always late";—and could not help wishing that, since the son I anticipated as a roaring blade had turned out the most ninimi pinimi of ladies' men, some other than a canonical guest had been invited to meet me. —Such a party could not but be a failure.

At all events, we were spared a long grace from the dignitary of the church; who, so long as the soup was on the table, left us in admiration of his empty chair. Anticipating the noiseless entrance and muffled approach which, from the era of monkhood's trailing sandal has been characteristic of the clerical gait, I kept constantly snatching glances towards the door, in the expectation of seeing a tall, dark shadow

glide into the room.—The reader will consequently appreciate my amazement when, just as the silver cover was lifted from a Humber salmon exhibiting a sort of leaden-lustred hue like an ingot of Potosi silver,—a burly step was heard approaching; drowned as it entered the room by the stentorian volume of a voice that cried, as if doing justice to a view halloo:

"Beg pardon, young ladies—beg pardon, my dear Sir Gratian!—My portmanteau and I have been tumbling each other upside down for the last half hour, to find a cravat not too starched for this confounded Terra del Fuego weather!"

The eager manner in which the dignitary instantly proceeded to officiate in helping the fish, and the care with which when it came to his turn he sprinkled cayenne pepper over his lobster sauce, convinced me that he had purposely eschewed the ox-tail soup of a Yorkshire housekeeper—(a thing of a consistency to serve for veneering mahogany!)—and made his appearance *à point* so as to secure the distribution of the fish. For, after bowing slightly to me in

return for the clumsy introduction intruded upon us at that inopportune moment by our host, he observed, "the French prefer caper-sauce with salmon; but, within safe distance of the sea, nothing like a fresh lobster!"—as though we had spent previous years together, discussing the mysteries of the stove and saucepan.

"Madeira!" cried he, when the butler offered him sherry or Sauterne, in a tone such as, in former centuries, might have fulminated excommunication. And a few minutes afterwards, having seized the occasion of his performing the old-fashioned ceremony of squeezing a lemon into the interstice of a forequarter of lamb, to examine the jolly *bon-vivant*, I could not help thinking that the nose which put even his red-cushioned cheeks to shame,—his yellow-white waistcoat with little sugar-loaf buttons, and yellow-white stock, that looked like a Chinese implement of torture,—had much more of the butler out of place, or yellow admiral on the retired list, than of the beneficed divine.

A favourite of the family, either as a relation

(for he was Archdeacon Roxborough) or from the untirable vigour of his animal spirits, I saw that the louder he talked, the more *sotto voce* became the remarks of Charles Roxborough; who seemed to think that, with a father and kinsman to bellow to each other like oxen from adjacent pastures, he might indulge in a double ration of the luxury of inanity. When answering the Archdeacon's invitation to take wine with him, the most mincing bride that ever pronounced the fatal "yes" in St. George's Church, could not have better emulated the plaintive murmur of the "sucking dove."

When I came to be better acquainted with the Archdeacon, (a scatterling of the Carlton House bacchanalians,) and had heard him troll his catches and vociferate certain madrigals in which the flowing bowl and rosy wine were freshly remembered, I could not help feeling that the Prince Regent might just as well have provided for Captain Morris or Theodore Hook by a silk apron, as for so powerfully-lunged a devotee of the things of this world. But if a

bad dignitary of the Church, he was not a bad man. The fact was that, in *his* youth, excesses of the table were so thoroughly the order of the day, inculcated from sire to son by paternal example, from heaven-born ministers down to ensigns of militia, that even the pulpit was no security against the contagion.

The Archdeacon, it appeared, had only arrived in time to dress; and from the resignation with which the heir of the house submitted to the coarse bantering of his unvenerable "very venerable" relative, touching certain losses at Ascot and having been forced to part with his yacht instead of joining the squadron at Cowes, I saw that he was a person who must have influence in the world of some kind or other; for Charles Roxborough belonged to a school not over sensitive to the claims of either cloth or kin.

As soon as the girls, (whom their brother's presence, in spite of his apparent deference towards them, seemed to reduce to cyphers,) had quitted the room, the Archdeacon's allusions

became indeed so personal, that Sir Gratian saw fit to check them. For they were not so completely *en famille* as to justify the *lessive* of their *linge sale.*

"As I live by bread and butter, Charles, my boy," said the jolly old gentleman, whom his kinsman's excellent claret was warming into indiscretion, "I scarce knew what to make of it when I heard of you in Yorkshire six weeks before Doncaster, and with the regattas bearing in sight!"—

"Surely you must have been equally surprized, my dear Archdeacon," mildly rejoined Charles Roxborough, "to hear of my father in London at the height of the season?"

"The height of the season, then, is in the dog-days, as time flies, eh?" cried his burly neighbour with a chuckling laugh. "In *my* time, it was not the fashion to eat dust with your strawberries. Catalani left off singing, as the nightingales do, in June; and Parliament was up as soon as the hay was down.—Ha, ha, ha!—But I was *not* at all surprized, Charles, to

hear of your father's visit to his lawyer, (for you won't deny, I suspect, that he saw more of Lincoln's Inn than of Grosvenor Square during his stay?) We were all expecting that Miss Jenny's breakdown would bring down a few more acres of oaks—eh, Sir Gratian! *The* Oaks, it seems, rendered it necessary to eradicate them root and branch!"

"I certainly made a bad Epsom of it!" said his victim, quietly passing him the claret. "But I have a famous book for Doncaster."

"I had rather hear of a famous book with Coutts!" rejoined the Archdeacon, luxuriously imbibing the *fumet* of his Château-Margaux. "There would be less fear, my dear Charles, of a renewal of my annual skirmishes with you, as trustee for your sisters' fortunes."

"I promise you, my dear Archdeacon, that, had you granted the little concession I wrote to ask previous to my father's visit to town, the money would have been replaced with interest by Christmas, and the Marlingford farms have remained in the family."

"Couldn't risk it, my dear boy,—couldn't possibly venture to risk it!—On one point, Charles, there is a family resemblance betwixt us. Like yourself, a trustee has no discretion—ha, ha, ha! Besides, 'tisn't fair to make the girls pay for your whistle. Let the governor down with his dust and welcome. If you ruin yourself and him on the turf, 'tis his own fault for bringing you up in the stable."

"You shall exhort me as long and severely as you please to-morrow morning, my dear Archdeacon," rejoined Charles Roxborough. "But by expatiating so much at length on our family failings, you will reduce Mr. Wrottesley into the same condition into which you have preached my father!" a gentle snore from whom avouched, at that moment, his son's assertion that he was asleep.

"Why, certainly, Sir Gratian don't appear to have been particularly wide awake lately!" retorted the Churchman, in a voice that might have wakened the Seven Sleepers. "As to Mr. Wrottesley, I entertained too much regard for

old Wrottesley (and his cellar,) not to be desirous of extending my admonitions to his representative."

An awkward bow and foolish laugh were all the acknowledgment I could venture.

"Wrottesley Hall used to produce the fattest venison and grow the finest asparagus in Yorkshire," said the Archdeacon gravely; "and there must be still some Hock in the cellars, which Colonel Wrottesley of the Coldstream sent home from Bremen, where it had been lying half a century."

"It will give me great pleasure to hear you admit, Mr. Archdeacon, that it has lost none of its flavour by coming into my possession," said I. In requital for which remote hint of hospitality, the jovial dignitary begged to direct my serious attention to the future Sir Charles Roxborough of Roxborough Elms.

"In him, you see what passes for the best dressed man in London," said he, with a spasmodic laugh. "Charley's coat gives the law to coats; and his hat has a right to look all other

hats out of countenance. But bear in mind, my dear young gentleman, that most of those who have exercised this species of autocracy in the world of fashion, end with having no coat to their back, or wherewithal to hang up their hat!" Then, suddenly dropping the nasal twang with which his pretended homily had been delivered, he challenged Charles Roxborough, who had not moved a muscle of his handsome face while under the lash, to a glass of claret; and, till we quitted the dining-room, continued to talk to me of old times at Wrottesley Hall.

"My poor friend Wrottesley never was the same man after that sober-sided fellow, Temple, got the living and filled him with qualms that ruined his digestion," said the Archdeacon gravely.

"In old Hurd's days, by my father's account, this must have been a much pleasanter neighbourhood," rejoined Mr. Roxborough, filling his glass.

"Ay, for those who don't care for women's

society," retorted the Archdeacon. "Your father and Sir Robert Hawley being widowers, could afford to enjoy the bachelor parties given by Wrottesley. But Temple blew the whole thing to pieces. In Mrs. Haldane's time, he never set foot in the Hall; though, by his well-calculated conduct at her death, he managed to get thoroughly round my old friend. I suspect he was a little disappointed that neither his own name nor his brother's appeared in the will."

"Had Henry Temple's jesuitical face any share, then, in Mrs. Haldane's conversion?" inquired Mr. Roxborough.

"No! he was but a boy when she died. But they say she recommended his brother (on whom he was already hanging on,) to bring him up for the Church; and persuaded old Wrottesley to promise him the next presentation to Rainham."

"I don't believe a word of it!" cried Sir Gratian, suddenly waking up at the sound of a familiar name. "I've always said, and will

stand to't, that if Wrottesley had meant any thing of the kind, he'd have given it in writing. Dr. Temple may choose to make his expectations on the subject an excuse for having winked at his brother's impudent pretensions to the hand of my daughter. But neither Gripham nor Klose had ever the least inkling of the matter; and nothing will ever persuade me that had any promise been made to a shrewd man like Temple, he would not have secured it in black and white."

"Strange to say, this is the first I have heard on the subject," said I, suddenly acquiring an inch or two in stature, on finding any item of my property called in question.

"And for your sake, may it be the last!" said Mr. Roxborough gravely. "In this neighbourhood, so barren in topics of conversation, they have seldom any thing better to discuss than the disposal of some wretched curacy."

"Rainham is not a curacy. Rainham is a living of a thousand a year," said I, inter-

rupting him, and not caring to hear my belongings disparaged.

"It might be the Archbishopric of York; and so long as Mr. Temple had no claim to it, I do not see that it entitles him to marry my sister," replied Roxborough, junior, with perfect self-possession.

"Neither does he, I should imagine," said I; "for he is said, at Cambridge, to have engaged himself to finish the education of a fellow-commoner whose father has capital patronage in the Church."

"He may finish the education of the Rajah of Tanjore for any thing I care!—But I have already expressed my objections to such a brother-in-law in terms which must prevent any man, with the spirit of a mouse, from persevering in his pretensions," replied Roxborough haughtily; "and my father has forbidden him the house."

A piece of intelligence which, when we adjourned to the drawing-room shortly afterwards for coffee, enabled me to look Car and

Adela defyingly in the face, when they affected to treat me with frigid civility. The latter, indeed, with even less. On my joining her at the open window, to which she had retreated to gaze out upon the lawn, which now exhibited its heavy dews to the lustre of a beautiful moonlight, she drew back with such unconcealed symptoms of disgust, that, as we were out of hearing of the rest of the party, I could not forbear observing, that "I had been in hopes the Battle of Prague was to be the last battle fought between us."

Even this allusion to our brief intimacy of the preceding winter failed to relax her countenance into a smile. At length, the scornful curl of her lip provoked me into adding, "I was anxious, Miss Roxborough, to say as much or more the other evening, when you did me the honour of an excursion into Wheledale. But you were so well attended, that I could not venture to accost you."

She was civil enough after that! Her features became blanched at the mere allusion;

and from that moment till I sat down to whist with the three Roxboroughs, (for the pleasure of losing six rubbers and receiving four hours of objurgation from the Archdeacon,) she contrived to hold me in desultory conversation beside the window, lest I should renew my hints in presence of her father and brother.

CHAPTER XI.

I'm serious—so are all men upon paper,
And why should I not form my speculation,
And hold up to the sun my little taper?
Mankind, just now, seem wrapt in meditation
On constitutions and steam-boats of vapour.

BYRON.

THE polite philosophy of Chesterfield has been sadly brought into disrepute, during the last half-hundred years, by the coarse sarcasm of an able man. But in spite of Dr. Johnson and all his dogmas, good manners, as the outward and visible sign of good nature, are not to be scouted.—And now that fashion has introduced into the finest drawing-rooms the dialect and pursuits of hackney coachmen, such courteous mildness of deportment as that of Charles

Roxborough, however meretricious or superficial, acquires some charm by force of contrast.

Instead of indulging in the Archdeacon's favourite pastime of "getting a rise out of a man," *he* carefully abstained at all times from unwelcome topics or piquant allusions. His handsome face and easy flow of conversation were charmingly in unison.—Winner or loser, his countenance preserved its calmness, and his voice its equanimity; so that, at the end of a year's acquaintance, I felt that I would give much—if only by way of variety—to see him ruffled.—

At the period of his visit to the Elms, I was rendered peculiarly sensitive to the attraction of his good breeding, by the thwartings to which I had been previously subjected.—My home probation,—my college mortifications,—my Wrottesley isolation, disposed me fully to appreciate the civilities of one who made my hours and predilections his own;—who proposed to introduce me to all his father's neighbours,—all his

own friends: and by the time we had attacked my rabbits together sufficiently often to satisfy him that I was an execrable shot, actually invited me to accompany him to the Highlands, where he rented a celebrated moor in common with the young Earl of Fortrose.—

During the week to intervene previous to his departure for the north, we were always together,—for boating, shooting, billiards, whist —sometimes at *my* house,—sometimes at his father's;—but without so much as a difference of opinion arising between us. After the frank reproofs of poor Andrew Grove,—after the rough give-and-take quizzing of my Cambridge companions,—after the home-hits of the Archdeacon,—the easy good breeding of Jack Roxborough was like running upon wood pavements after rumbling over the disjointed stones of Cheapside.

But however pleasant to myself, our intimacy seemed to create uneasy sensations in others.— His sisters more especially. Though no interruption to their sisterly intercourse with him,

(which, though studiously courteous, was neither warm nor familiar,) my presence at the Elms appeared unwelcome to *them*. While on the other hand, Dr. Temple contented himself with lifting his hat to me at a distance, as I might now do to the Queen; and Gripham, notwithstanding the unconfidential terms on which we lived, could not forbear inquiring of me, the first time we were alone together, whether I really intended to quit the neighbourhood before the return of Sir Robert from Buxton; and whether it were true that I had placed myself under such dangerous tutelage as that of Mr. Roxborough?—

"*Quite* true!" said I, without a moment's hesitation. "Charles Roxborough is my nearest neighbour of my own condition in life. We are likely to go through the world together; and I think myself peculiarly fortunate in finding, in this accursedly dull neighbourhood, a companion who is so much a man of the world."

"If Mr. Roxborough persevere much longer in his present habits," was the dry rejoinder of

the man of business, "you may find other neighbours at Roxborough Elms sooner perhaps, Sir, than you look for."

"Why, is not the estate entailed?" said I, a little surprised.

"The place may be let.—Sir Gratian may be forced to dispose of his life interest."

"He is in difficulties then?"

"Not that I can presume to say. But a man who has such fearful stakes perpetually fluctuating as your friend, Mr. Roxborough, is well qualified to bring down an old house over his head."

"All this," said I, "may afford reasonable grounds for displeasure to his family,—though nothing like dissension is apparent between father and son. But I see no reason, Mr. Gripham, why it should operate against poor Roxborough with his friends. A man too successful at play, indeed, may be a dangerous acquaintance. But from all I can learn of Charley Roxborough, he ruins no one but himself."

And I can both say and swear that during the month I soon afterwards spent in his company at Glenhama *my* purse underwent no manner of danger. On the contrary, I was entertained by Charley and his friend, Lord Fortrose, with the hospitality of a brace of Arabs.— Capital sport—capital cheer—capital fun;—and without seeming to consider even my thanks due at the end of the visit, when, after a week's deer-stalking at the Duke of Banff's, we steered back towards the south.

It was not for me to inquire, after a day's work in which we bagged three hundred brace of grouse, beside black- and other game, wound up by a dinner dressed by the Earl's French cook, and washed down by the Earl's French wine, what chance I should have had of a share in such sport and such orgies, had I remained the penniless nonentity I emerged from Eagle House.

In the course of my visit, I had made one or two attempts with Charley to get at the secret of his sister's engagement. But Roxborough,

who, even in his mellowest moments, was as dry as still champagne, was not to be betrayed into prating about his own family. Unlike the fellows whom my raw taste had chosen for college companions, so far from pretending to talk of "the Governor," or show up the rusticities of a father as different from himself as a frieze coat from a velvet doublet or a suit of Milan mail, he never alluded to Sir Gratian save in terms of distant respect.

"In the late Mrs. Temple's time," said he, in reply to one of my pointblank interrogations, "my sisters (who, from the early loss of their mother, are sadly at a loss for companionship of their own sex at Roxborough Elms) found Wrottesley Rectory a happy resource. As far as I remember, she was a charming woman, gentle, domestic—all that a woman ought to be. But she showed a sad lack of judgment in encouraging the impertinent pretensions of a younger brother of her husband, having his whole way to make in the world, and nothing to recommend him beyond tolerable abilities, culti-

vated by a tolerable education,—in an era when well-educated abilities are running barefoot in the streets!—I form no inordinate estimate of my sisters. They are simply good-looking, well-tempered, inoffensive girls, of undeniable pedigree, and twenty thousand pounds a piece at the death of their father. But even this is too good for a college tutor, who sprang from no one knows where, and is heir to no one knows what!"

And forthwith, without waiting for my rejoinder, the nature of which the indignant workings of my countenance must have tolerably foreshown, he fell into his usual vein of quiet extravagance; very different from the measured tone in which he studiously discussed, in all its bearings, the House of Roxborough Elms.

On my return to Cambridge, (thanks to the diversions secured to me by Charley, Lord Fortrose, and my stars, I had no leisure for so much as a passing visit to Hentsfield!) how coarse, and dull, and common-place, appeared the dissipations of Bob Barker, and the profligacy of my

quondam friend, Hetton. A more accurate disclosure of my standing in the world disposed many who had hitherto only regarded me as a raw tiger, to propitiate the lord of thousands. But now that I had seen wrong things done in the right way, men of an ordinary stamp of dissoluteness delighted me not, — nor women neither. Parodying the threadbare philosophy of Poussin, I longed to inscribe on my vacant seat (after I had fallen under the table)—"I too have lived in Alsatia!"

Since I attained to years of philosophy, it has often struck me that writers of pretended autobiography, who would fain impart to their fictions the verisimilitude of memoirs true as my own, are decidedly wrong in representing their heroes as victims to *ennui* before they have plunged their inexperience in the billowy gulph of the world.—*Ennui* is a sensation of mental lassitude that denotes foregone labour—a species of moral atony consequent on previous over-excitement. The beardless boy who talks of been "used up,"—the stripling who fancies him-

self "bored,"—is simply an affected ass. The indolent hypochondriacism which has been erected into a chronic disease of the mind, under the conventional name of *ennui*, denotes a more solid foundation.

Even I, though my varied diversions at Glenhama and Banff Castle had done something towards creating an imaginary platitude around me, was as yet unqualified to be susceptible of *ennui*. The pulses of life were stirring too energetically within me;—those maddening pulses, whose precocious and abortive agitation is the cause of half the failures and false conceptions of mankind, by prompting genius to the misdirection of its powers ere it acquire the stamina requisite to impart sterling value to its efforts; and instigating the mere pleasure-lover into excesses which bequeath a stigma for life. Happy those who, compelled like my poor friend, Andrew Grove, to devote themselves, soul and body, to the foundations of a professional career, have no leisure to indulge the ravings of youthful fancy, which would fain wing their way towards the sun with the waxen pinions of Icarus.

But methinks I am indulging in a vein that would better become the cassock of Archdeacon Roxborough.

I forgot to mention at the proper place, (and the omission may possibly have led my younger readers to wonder at the tameness with which I submitted to re-imprisonment at college after my baptism of *rouéism* in whisky punch at Banff Castle and Glenhama,) that though I found no time for a second visit to Hentsfield, I kept to my engagement of spending a few days at Hawley Chase. Whether to propitiate my old guardian for future favours, or evince my gratitude for past, no matter: but I promise you, good reader, that, whatever the motive, the visit was a fearful sacrifice.

For, dreary as Wrottesley Hall had appeared to me in its pristine state of desolation, there was something too quaint and strange in the indecorous oddities of the house to beget melancholy impressions;—whereas every thing at Hawley Chase was dispiriting as Tadmor in the Desart!—The place was dead—fossil—petrified.—The withered old servants moved

like pieces of mechanism. The furniture, the hours, the service, were those of a past century. The stately rooms had been so long uncheered by the movement of social life, that the very dust in their dark corners seemed drier than other dust. All was faded, cold, and colourless. Nothing of the graces of modern life—nothing of its vitality.

The pheasant-shooting, however, being such as could only have been afforded by the preserves of a gouty old Baronet of unsociable habits living in a thin neighbourhood, I had little leisure for the indulgence of my curiosity concerning the habits of the Hawley family. The old servants of the house, indeed, were as cold and taciturn as their master. But a few incidental observations satisfied me that the old man's dreariness of spirit had fallen upon him, and the paralysis of vital power upon his people and possessions, from the epoch, a quarter of a century before, of his quarrel with his son.

From that period, the sun had ceased to shine at Hawley Chase. No one seemed to care

whether its grass grew or its harvests ripened. Where was the use, thought the venerable gardener, of cultivating flowers in pleasure-grounds where not a human being ever set foot? And neither to bailiff, forester, nor park-keeper, had the reserved old Baronet signified, by more than the due discharge of their liberal salaries, whether he were satisfied or dissatisfied with the aspect of his estate.

When I ventured to praise it to him—chiefly for want of a readier topic of conversation—a slight tinge of colour passed into his wan cheeks; but certainly not arising from any pleasurable emotion. Perhaps it panged him to hear a tribute to the beauty of possessions which strangers were to inherit. The truth was, Sir Robert had through life so systematically avoided the society of a younger generation, that not a word a man of my age was likely to utter but was calculated to shock, or give him pain.

He would not, I suspect, have exposed himself to the annoyance of my visit at all, but for his wish to impress unmistakably on my mind

that the continuance of his favour depended not only on the fulfilment of my engagement to abide at college till I had taken my degree, but the credit with which I quitted the university at last. And though my readers may choose to consider me above all occasion for my guardian's patronage, let me tell them that favour of the nature to which he remotely alluded was such as even a prince of the blood might have courted.

For when, in the wantonness of my desire to join my friends Charles Roxborough and Fortrose at Melton, I ventured to inquire of what possible use could be a degree to a country squire living soberly on his property, he burst into a flow of words which not only caused me to marvel at his monosyllabic eloquence in the senate; but actually held forth a perspective of the union, at some future epoch, of the estates of Hawley Chase and Wrottesley Hall!—

"Have you no ambition, Sir?" said he. "Have you no desire to find yourself, in maturer years, in the foremost rank of the

legislators of this mighty country and mighty century? And do you suppose that a churlish measure of instruction suffices to qualify a man for such a task, now that modern civilization has doubled the limits of the ancient world?—Are not new continents, new colonies, new languages, new arts, new sciences, yearly springing up to tax the human faculties with further study? Are not political combinations and precedents perpetually defeated by the engenderment of national wants undreamed of by our ancestors? The world, Mr. Wrottesley, is pregnant with the fate of nations,—with a future far greater than the past. Already, the march of public events has outstripped my foresight; and great indeed would be my mortification, were I to find the man who, at some future time, will succeed to my place, so nerveless, so devoid of the glow of patriotism becoming his sanguine time of life, as to shrink from the trouble of mastering the mere alphabet of his public vocation."—

I was too powerfully struck by hearing myself

invoked as his "successor" to find breath for vindication. For a glance of the old man's eye round the ancient dining-room, hung with family portraits, in which we were sitting after dinner when he made this sortie, convinced me that the expression he had used of "succeeding to my place," purported "my place in Yorkshire," rather than "my place in Parliament;"—Sir Gratian Roxborough having more than once informed me that the entail of the Chase had been cut off by the last generation, and that the present Baronet was heirless.

So immediately, indeed, did I commence my usual task of Castle building on these foundations, by picturing to myself the union of the two estates, and the claim which their possession would confer to the representation of the county, a worthy discharge of which duty might at some future time elevate me to the Upper House, where such landed property as mine was well entitled to be represented, that I was perhaps less attentive than I ought to have been to the further exhortations in which my well-intentioned

guardian saw fit to indulge; warning me against undue intimacy with Charles Roxborough, not in the overbearing spirit of Gripham, but with the shrewd discernment of a man of the world.

"I understand that the young ladies, whom I have not seen since they were children, are pleasing and amiable," said he. "But the man who marries either of them will one day or other be saddled with the maintenance of the whole family. Charles Roxborough's pursuits, Sir, are of a nature to beggar the bank of England."

Still harping on my prospects as his "successor," I was at as little pains to disculpate Charley as myself.

"So satisfied am I that the husband of either of Sir Gratian's daughters is marked for ruin," added my guardian, still more gravely, "that such a consideration has alone prevented my pressing on your recognition the claims of Dr. Temple's brother to the next presentation to the living of Rainham. Were Henry Temple to obtain it, I understand Caroline Roxborough

would become his wife; and I have too much regard for both the brothers, to assist in forwarding such a consummation."

"Of which I am the more glad, my dear Sir," said I, "since, having no reason to surmise that pledges of any kind respecting the preferment in question had been held out by my late benefactor, I have offered it to one of my personal friends."

"Archdeacon Roxborough?" cried Sir Robert, with sudden animation.

"Neither him nor any one resembling him!" cried I, with equal eagerness. "I have promised it to a most excellent young man—a school-fellow of my own."

"Too young, then, by half," said the old gentleman, again interrupting me, "for the charge of so large a parish. Rainham has a population of twelve thousand souls—a terrible population, Sir—the population of a manufacturing town!—It would, in my opinion, be criminal to invest inexperienced youth with such a responsibility."

The value of the benefice, I argued, would well enable my young friend to keep a curate. On which hint ensued a lecture upon the indecency with which church preferment was so often made subservient to private interests; in which it was easy to trace the animosities of the staunch old Whig against the prevailing system of things at Carlton House. For though the Eldon letters were as yet unpublished, which have exhibited the Prince Regent as bribing his Lord Chancellor by a dish of his favourite dainty of "liver and crow" to repay his dinner with the gift of a living to some courtly postulant, the bestowal of the highest benefices of the church to the hangers-on of the royal whist-table, or the household preceptor of some royal favourite, had already laid the foundation of abuses and discontents, which have shaken the established church to its very altar-stone.

In the dull, dreary old mansion in Arlington Street, where, during the sitting of parliament, Sir Robert, when his health permitted, led precisely the same life of routine as at his

Yorkshire seat, I had, long afterwards, frequent occasion to listen to diatribes of a similar nature; produced by resentments which consolidated into a party (almost as much as the liberal principles they professed,) those former friends of the Prince of Wales, whom his political apostacy had converted into antagonists of the King. Not but that I believe the displeasures of Sir Robert Hawley to have been wholly of a public nature. With all his seeming apathy, he loathed from the bottom of his soul the frivolity of a sovereign who was doing his best to debase and emasculate the noblest institutions of the land, and convert our oaken-hearted Britons into a nation of fribbles.

As yet, however, I had not been admitted into the circle of which this sentiment was the bond of union. As yet, I was only the tyro who, having received a salutary lesson from the failures of his college *début*, was beginning to accept with reserve, if not mistrust, the overtures secured me by introductions from Roxborough and Fortrose, whose dashing exploits

had constituted, in their Cambridge day, the despair of proctors and admiration of undergraduates.

The truth was, that my mind was so swollen by the new ambitions which had taken possession of it, as to "o'er inform its tenement of clay;" and all the leisure which a zealous tutor could be prevailed on to leave upon my hands, was devoted to the pleasant pastime of Castle-building.

There was certainly some excuse for me!—The prospect of a rent-roll of seven and thirty thousand a year in one of the loveliest districts of a noble and prosperous county—encumbered with timber that cried aloud for the axe, and would furnish the means of constructing a palace, in case that neither of the two capital mansions now existing satisfied my fastidious taste,—to say nothing of pictures and statues, cabinets of gems, and closets of old China,—family plate, family pictures, and family jewels, such as might have contented a duchess as dowry for her daughter,—and which had been flung, as it were,

in the face of the threadbare gawkey of Eagle House,—was sufficiently exciting.

There was not (I thought) a chance—for let it not be supposed that the castles I was so fond of constructing were uninhabited castles: there was not the remotest chance that a rational being like Caroline Roxborough, influenced by an intelligent sister, and domineered over by a brother as knowing as a pet fox, would disdain the possession of all this, for the sake of a poor parson, drudging through the *corvée* of college tutorship, without patronage or prospect of preferment.

I never passed Henry Temple, in his white-seamed gown and shabby gaiters, in the gardens of Trinity, without laughing to scorn the possibility that a Miss Roxborough of Roxborough Elms would adhere to her engagement with one whom, in his present position, I regarded as little better than a hireling.

Nor did I ever acquaint myself, through "Bell's Life" or the "Sporting Magazine," with the defeats of Marmaduke, or distancing of

Miss Jenny, without thankfulness for the ill-luck which seemed to have pounced as suddenly as the cholera on Charles Roxborough's study; satisfied that every thousand guineas extracted from his pocket became a clamp to unite my destinies still closer with those of his sister.

One good consequence, meanwhile, ensued from my Castle-building. My constant use of the aërial trowel kept both billiard-queue and dice-box out of my hand. The quiet schooling in vice bestowed on me in the course of the autumn by Charley Roxborough, had served to convince me that to play with such scamps as Bob Barker and Hetton, conveyed a certain loss both of money and credit.

"The fellows have not wherewithal to pay you," said he, "were it possible for you to rise a winner; and you will forfeit all chance of getting into the best clubs or the best company, by being only heard of in theirs."

Such was the real motive of that abstinence from play, on which, six months afterwards, poor Andrew Grove congratulated me as a virtue.

But why do I say "*poor* Andrew Grove?" Already, thanks to the zeal which had dictated the pursuits of his vocation, Andrew was a made man. Andrew had taken an honour. While *I* was wandering listlessly from pillar to post, with my greyhound at my heels,—nay, while *I* was even drinking deep of Glenlivet and ascending the heights of Ben Nevis, Andrew was quaffing the waters of Castaly and scaling Parnassus. By which means, he became a scholar, while I remained—I was going to say—an ass. Wiser perhaps (as an incipient M.P.) to define myself "Wrottesley Wrottesley of Wrottesley Hall."

In the above capacity, by the way, it behoves me to expound to such of my readers as are circumstantial enough to delight in a dot over every i, that, though untempted to a personal visit to my family, a branch of my Pactolus, albeit a slender one, had been made to flow in the direction of Hentsfield. To my sisters, I had made liberal presents; to my mother, (pending the attainment of my majority,) an allowance out of my own allowance, of five

hundred a year. But the annuity was burthened with a condition that proved far from palatable to Dora and Emily.

"In consideration of the marked approval with which my late revered relative, Mr. Wrottesley had contemplated her abstinence from the temptations of London life, I was desirous that she should not, till I was better able to secure her position in the world, hazard a season in town."—

In vain did my elder sister address me a solemn adjuration in two pages of Bath post, and my younger half a ream of French note paper, filled with alternate banterings and supplications,—each privately assuring me that her prospects in life would be irretrievably blighted by this postponement of their introduction to the eligibilities of London life; that three grey hairs had been detected among the raven tresses of Emily, while Dora's complexion was very far from what it used to be;—that the latter's only chance of salvation lay in consulting a homœopathic doctor, and that unless the former were

enabled to place her teeth under the care of Paterson Clarke, she should become a mumbler within the year.

It would not do!—In a reply by return of post, partaking of Dora's bombast and Emily's raillery, I unfolded a chapter or two of the science of worldly wisdom, for which I was indebted to the schooling of Charley Roxborough.

"The small pittance," I informed them, "which *at present* I was able to assign to my mother's use, was not such as might entitle the sisters of Wrottesley, of Wrottesley Hall, to take up their station in the class in which they must naturally desire to fix themselves for life. Better therefore to wait for a first-class place, than, by precipitancy, run the risks of the waggon.—As to their physical wants, the excellent Berkhampstead apothecary, old Steel, who had hitherto kept the family constitution in repair, was still at his post. Nor had I any fear that the seclusion of Hentsfield would prove fatal to their establishment in life; since

even in London, what better fortune could attend one of them than to become Lady Stormont of Crowsden Grange? (I was well aware that the travelled man had already shuffled off and returned to the Levant.) Nor was Emily herself likely to pick up at Almacks a more eligible partner than Captain de Vesci; who, since her dismissal of him the preceding year, had proved a sufficiently good match for the only daughter of the Earl of Connaught."

No need to add, for the perfecting of the lesson I was disposed to give them, that Dora's rejected swain, George Whichcote, was now a London man, enjoying a commissionership of fifteen hundred a year, and on the eve of marriage with a Welch heiress. Even to prove my superior wisdom and the folly of their premature hauteur, I could not find it in my narrow heart to attribute consequence to the brother of my evil genius,—Tom Whichcote, of King's.

CHAPTER XII.

Worms in the bud, who ply the hateful art,
To sow corruption in the youthful heart.

CREECH.

CHRISTMAS did not carry me back to Wrottesley, as my readers may expect, and as Sir Robert and Gripham decidedly expected.—Roxborough and Fortrose were chumming together at Melton, and I was rash enough to take at their word their promise to mount me for a week during the vacation.

I say rash enough. For though my overweening self-love secured me from all suspicion that the moment my back was turned, my bosom friends were the first to join in the general laugh provoked by my rawness in the

field, I was made to pay pretty handsomely at *écarté*,—at which I was as great a novice as at a double fence,—towards the cost of their hunting stable and French cook. And *this* time, after the severe warning I had received from Sir Robert Hawley, it was impossible to apply to *him* for the means of liquidating my engagements; so that had not Roxborough kindly arranged the matter for me by backing bills at six months' date, I should have had to quit Melton still further lowered in self-estimation than by the consciousness of a broken collar-bone, a dislocated shoulder, and the loss of eighteen hundred pounds.

But what then? Had I not been the daily companion of the two most renowned members of the Old Club?—Had I not been hitched into an epigram by Alvanley, and a caricature by Meyler?

But what tickled my vanity more than even these distinctions, I had formed at Melton a close intimacy with Lord Hampden,—the ruling influence of the set of which Tom Whichcote

was the shoe-black.—Not because he thought me less of a snob at Melton than when, a triton among minnows, he shyed my acquaintance at Cambridge; but because, being himself a minnow among the tritons of fashion, he wanted me as a stepping-stone to that of the unapproachable Charles Roxborough. Whereas all I wanted of *him* was an avouchment on our return to college that, if tacitly excluded from the clique of Lord Clanalbin and John Jocelyn, with their *betters* I stood better than they.

For
Use doth breed a habit in a man;

and the exclusive clique had accustomed me to dispense with their society, till I had ceased to miss it; and, released from the influence of the quiet but cutting irony by which Charles Roxborough, with seeming unconcern, knew how to pique me into the commission of whatever follies it suited him I should indulge in, I resumed the mode of life I had adopted in accordance with my guardian's advice and my

own projects; and my well-thumbed copies of De Lolme, Hume, Russell, and Adam Smith,—to say nothing of Say, Malthus, and the pamphlets of Ricardo, piled on my table, proved that my studies had an object ulterior to university honours.

More from the want of means to figure in London than want of courage to attempt it, I intended, at the close of term, to proceed at once into Yorkshire;—probably to ascertain whether Wrottesley of Wrottesley Hall, now verging towards his twentieth year, would not be accepted as an escort to "wander by the brookside" in Wheledale, in place of the sable-suited knight who was engaged to private-tutor during the vacation a city alderman's son and heir, at some Devonshire watering place.—But as any premature demonstration of my attachment would have been fatal to the Machiavelic projects of Caroline Roxborough's brother, he wrote me so urgent a request to come and spend a week with him in his Albany Chambers, on pretence of accompanying him

to Ascot, to witness the first running of an "own brother to Marmaduke," on which were founded the highest expectations, that I suffered myself to be caught.—

For with such a rent-roll as mine what fear that, within two years of the attainment of my majority, I should experience difficulty in a levy of supplies? The moment a hint of the state of my finances was afforded him, I found in Charley as assiduous a tutor in the sister arts of money-raising and money-squandering, as at Trinity College in logic, in the reverend Doctor Puzzlemywig.

London was as usual at that bewildering season of the year, far more merry than wise; and galvanized moreover by the unnatural vitality which is apt to vivify the apoplectic corpse of modern society in the onset of a new reign. Dandyism, so far from falling with its banished dictator, was looking up, under royal patronage; and though prize-fighting had given place to yachting, snuff to smoking, and drinking to high play, there was quite enough

vice and folly left in the great metropolis to satisfy the unsophisticated palate of nineteen.—

For though Dora and Emily on hearing of my visit to town, were pleased to connect my enjoyment of the season solely with balls and assemblies, I hope I need not do Charles Roxborough the justice to declare that he would as soon have accepted an invitation to dinner in Bedford Square, as allowed me to set foot on any floor where white satin sandals prevailed; save the *coulisses* of the Opera, to which his friendship with Ebers afforded us ready access.—For even had it not been his policy to secure me against matrimonial entanglement, it would have been fatal to his own immaculacy of fashion to stand sponsor in his own circle, to a tactless whelp like myself; and by inaugurating me only into the least desirable of the two or three sets with which horseflesh and hazard had brought him acquainted,—the set whose daily lounge was comprised within fifty yards round the corner of Clifford Street,

(comprehending Long's, Stevens's, Stultz's, Andrews's, Storr and Mortimer's, and Delcroix's,)—the set whose sun rose at 3 P.M. and set at five in the morning, after stunning by garus punch the head-ache engendered by champagne,—he soon rendered me a subscriber to their faith, that a dancing man is the most wishy washy of deleterious compounds, and a ball-room a resort only pardonable to a man on the look out for a wife,—more especially if the wife of another.

To this I the more readily assented, from having grounded *my* abstract ideas of love and courtship upon a saunter beside a purling rill in a lonely valley; or a game at billiards in a country house with a red-nosed old baronet; his pretty daughters, in all their purity of mind and muslin, looking demurely on. Among the vagaries of my musing fits in later life, by the way, I have sometimes pondered on the undue account taken of the influence of the said mind and muslin in our social morals.—The decorum of English manners is, I am convinced, mainly

attributable to the introduction of girls and clergy into the social circle. On the continent, where the first-named angelic purifiers of corruption are incarcerated in the school-room or convent, till they attain the matron privilege of hearing what ought not to be said, and seeing what ought not to be done, to the end of wrong-doing in their turn; and where, with the exception of the Pope's Nuncio gliding like a dark shadow through some diplomatic soirée, the priesthood, saving in Italy, is unrepresented in the worldly world,—a salutary check is wanting.—In England, on the contrary, no book must be written save such as affords no offence either to a black gown or white frock;—no equivocal topic must be discussed,—no unseemly jest hazarded.—

In my Stevens' and Long's days, I probably rebelled against this diet of pap. But now, that I have come to sound diet, roast mutton and old port, I am well pleased to bow to the clerical censorship of the press and missish ascendancy in the drawing-room.

In Catholic times and countries, where Cardinals, by their involvement in affairs of state, come to mingle in courtly pleasures—as the days of Wolsey in England, and Richelieu in France,—excessive forms of stateliness and solemnity are apt to prevail. But so long as the vest and cassock remain an integral rather than predominant portion of society, they perform the same useful function which the paper weight by my side executes for the volatile leaves on which it is placed—*i.e.*, to prevent their flying out of the window.

The above sapient observation purports to divert the reader's attention from a fact I would fain slur over in these my memoirs; namely, that, overlooking my promises to Hawley Chase, and considerably to the detriment of Castles in the Air constructed with the fond partiality of a Pugin or Wightwick, I did not make my appearance in Yorkshire till the partridges made theirs in the stubble; and, alas! somewhat less plump and far less strong on the wing! Old Nicholls looked even more shocked than glad to see me again.

I might not have made the sacrifice of the visit even then; but that Roxborough was off for the Elms, to give a week's shooting to Fortrose, who possessed no manor south of the Tweed; and proposed our making the journey together. But I much doubt whether he would have afforded occasion for a meeting betwixt me and his sisters, but that he was to be on the spot, to influence what was going on.

"And could not my missus and the young ladies be persuaded to 'company you, Mr. Harry?" inquired my faithful old Adam, after wistfully surveying through his spectacles my lank cheeks and tremulous hands. "I'm sure, Sir, (though God knows the air of the wolds might bring the very dead to life,) you'd be none the worse for their nursing!"

"My mother and sisters are at Tunbridge Wells, Nicholls," said I; "a gayer place for them than this wilderness of a house. As to me, my good friend, provided the partridges give me work enough, a sportsman's hours and habits, and Yorkshire cheer, will soon enable me to bring up my lee-way."

Next day I hastened to pay my respects to Sir Robert; and from the measured formality with which he received me, had some grounds for apprehension that I was about to receive, in one fell dose, the remonstrances which ill-health and worse spirits prevented his dispensing in occasional letters.

But the old man had not uttered ten sentences relative to my London career, and the disrespect I had shown him by making no further attempt to see him in town than by leaving a card at his door, before the severe tones of his voice softened. Once or twice, as if inadvertently, he called me "Wrottesley," omitting his favourite "mister." But if the use of the name were inadvertent, its effect upon his ear was startling. It brought old times before him.—It brought old friends before him. The next epithet he used in addressing me was "my dear boy!"—

It was not, however, exclusively the influence of his old friend's name which tended to mollify his feelings towards me. From hints he unin-

tentionally let fall, I perceived that he had been taking sly cognizance of my Cambridge career; and that certain proficiencies and distinctions of which I have refrained from bragging to the reader, were favourably noted in the book of Hawley Chase. My guardian was evidently as proud of me as displeased at finding me Roxborough-ized from top to toe.

Not that he surmised a thousandeth part of the evil. All he knew was that I had been seen in Charley's phaeton at Ascot, which *he* considered as being publicly branded with the stigma of horse-racing; and that I had made my re-appearance in Yorkshire in company with him and a young Scottish Earl, who passed for one of his dupes whom he was gradually converting into a confederate.

Secretly rejoicing that in these publicities consisted the head and front of my offending, and that of my bills, bonds, and life-insurances, he knew no more than of Mademoiselle Estelle or Miss Jenny, I purchased leisure for a week's lounging at the Elms by promising to pass a

day or two with him previous to my return to Cambridge.

For the Elms had become a dearer lounge than ever; not because Charley and Fortrose affected to receive from me points at billiards in place of those I had been forced to accept by poor old Sir Gratian, but because the girls, instead of drumming me out of my senses with the Battle of Prague, or snubbing me out of all patience by their saucy raillery, had become with me, as with the rest of their friends, meek, mild, and forbearing. Adela the most so. Though it was from Caroline I fain would have received the last rose of summer to place in my button-hole, and the vacant chair at dinner to place myself by her side, it was by the Roxelana-faced Adela these symptoms of favour were squandered on me. Perhaps because Lord Fortrose was as much in love with her *petit nez retroussé* and laughing grey eyes as the extent of his Nock and Manton infatuations as a crack shot would allow. Perhaps, with sisterly consideration, to divert my attentions from Caro-

line, by whom it was Sir Gratian's pleasure (because Charley's pleasure) that they should be accepted.

Not that I found much reason to complain of the virulence of her opposition to their wishes. Now, indeed, that my glance has acquired surer perception, I know to what to attribute the gentle amenity with which she deigned to ramble with me in the shrubberies, listening patiently to my announcement of all I intended to be—all I intended to do for Wrottesley—for the neighbourhood—for Yorkshire—nay, for the kingdom itself, (without, however, venturing to inquire what she would do for me in return, as regarded giving my old house and young heart a mistress.) But at that period I attributed to a growing estimation of my merits and sense of my devotedness, the languid smile with which she lent her ear to my braggartry. For oh! what adorer of nineteen can be expected to distinguish between the courtesy that purports to conciliate him as a friend, and the smiles that encourage his passion!

But what encouragement was needed? Was not the sight of her sweet face—was not the murmur of her kindly voice sufficient for my happiness? Wanted there other evidence of her goodness than the duteous and familiar love with which the villagers ran after her as we passed them in our walks, to petition, or pour benedictions on her head?—Or the silence in which she resigned herself to the coarse despotism of Sir Gratian, and the bitterer though more polished tyranny of her brother?

My only consolation now, after all that passed between us and the load it has left on my conscience, is that I *did* love her—yea, love her with all my soul; which, considering the unripeness of my age and shallowness of my nature, is some proof that there were a few ears of wheat among the tares.

But what signifies the good that lives, like truth in a well, at the bottom of a man's heart! It is that which lies on the surface, and which he brings into hourly action, that imports to his fellow creatures; as a hundred pound

note in circulation is worth millions in the miser's chest.

Quantities of county neighbours, or rather all the neighbours the county could produce, mustered at the Elms during our stay, in my honour, or perhaps in that of Lord Fortrose. In saying "all," however, I should reserve Lord Meadowley. Of *him* not a whisper was heard. Not because his rank rendered him inaccessible to the Roxboroughs, for greater men were great friends with Sir Gratian; but because the only point on which the old Baronet exhibited much consistency of self-will and self-government, was in a virulence of Toryism worthy of the dark ages. Squire Courtfield of Courtfield Manor, his county member for the last forty years, whose brass-buttoned blue coat and mahogany-topped boots, whose ante-progress dogmaticality, and sturdy refusal of a peerage, rendered him, in old Roxborough's eyes, the embodied representative of John Bull, and in those of Roxborough Junior, the Pope by whom the immaculacy of Church and State, of Turf

and Game Laws was protected, as far as Yorkshire was concerned, from the pernicious innovations of the times,—was too fanatically worshipped at the Elms for toleration to be extended towards Lord Meadowley; who advocated uniformly in the Lower House the liberal principles so nobly supported by his venerable father in the Upper.

Aware of the mutual good-will which had existed between his Lordship and my predecessor, as well as of his staunch friendship for Sir Robert, I should not have been sorry to make his acquaintance; and, but that my guardian considered Whig politics as inherent a portion of Wrottesley Hall as its turret clock, he would probably have surmounted his peevishness of spirit and terror of the gout, and contrived the introduction in a sociable manner. But regarding my succession to his old friend's principles to be as certain as my succession to his lands and tenements, he unwisely left me open to the overtures of Courtfield Manor, and the cajoleries of my friend Charley.

That a Charles Roxborough could concern himself about politics at all, never, in short, entered the head of the recluse. Sir Robert conceived Charley's object in his visits to Oatlands, to consist in horse-flesh and high play; blind to the fact that the very atmosphere of the place was so charged with high Toryism, that a man must imbibe it or flee.

The truth was—that, looking forward to the accession of an heir apparent (whose advent, had it ever occurred, would unquestionably have revolutionized the kingdom,) the favour of his Royal Highness the Duke of York was courted by my knowing friend far more with regard to the Red Book than his betting book. The rapid race of ruin he was engaged in, rendered it necessary for Charley to secure himself a refuge against a rainy day; under which prospect it was no bad spec to undermine his way to a lay lordship of the Admiralty or junior lordship of the Treasury under the sceptre of Frederick I.

Not a trace of self-interest, however, was

visible in the respectful cordiality with which he welcomed the county member to his father's house.

Accustomed to hear old Courtfield spoken of in Yorkshire with the utmost deference, not alone by scrubs like Gripham and Klose, or gapers after government loaves and fishes, like the very Venerable Archdeacon Roxborough,—but by people so high in their own esteem that even the Ark of the Covenant would have been hardly sacred in their eyes, I had imbibed a sor of awe-struck veneration for him, much such as the Venetians may have felt for the brazen lions constituting the post-office of the Council of Ten. I had formed a vague notion of the old senator as containing within his bald head as within a deed-chest, an abstract of Magna Charta, Blackstone's Commentaries, and the works of Archdeacon Paley; and would have defied the united efforts of Trin. Coll. Cam., the Inner Temple, and a Secret Committee united, to hold the best of it against Courtfield of Courtfield Manor.

At our first meeting, the old gentleman certainly did his utmost to keep up the illusion. Though he talked racily of fox-hunting and sturdily of ploughing matches, the moment politics were incidentally brought on the *tapis*, he replied by a monosyllabic growl,—mysterious as an oracle,—stalwart as a Commander of the forces.—And great was my amazement on discovering in later life, that the simile of the lion of St. Mark held good in more points than one: —that he was important less as the organ than as the symbol of a party.—

But in those days, party politics were a different affair from now. The Reform Bill did for Parliament what the downfall of John Company did for China; *i.e.* exterminate mystery, plundering and pilfering as thoroughly as the establishment of railroads is about to extinguish brigandage in the Roman States; whereas in the era of rotten boroughs, sinecures, and patent places, all was close and cunning as in the land of mandarins and Joss-ery before a few Britannia broadsides opened the eyes of Pekin.

I contented myself, however, with contemplating old Courtfield from as humble a level as though he had been the lion at the top of Northumberland House, and I a gazer in the Strand; leaving it to my friend Charley to whisper gravely with him over the great letters of the Courier, and emulate with due solemnity the silent vibration of his head whenever the name of Henry Hunt (now drowned in the waters of oblivion,) or some other radical leader, was pronounced in their abhorrent hearing.

"You're a sad rogue, Harry Wrottesley,—a very sad rogue!" sputtered Archdeacon Roxborough, poking me facetiously between the ribs on running against me, the first evening he discovered me between the double doors of the billiard room, stealing away from one of these mystic palavers. "*You* don't know how to take care of yourself, I suppose!" And I, who, so far from surmising that he believed me intent on keeping my political principles safe from being picked and stolen by the two con-

fabulating Tories, fancied my purpose to be only too apparent of enjoying myself by the side of Adela and Caroline while the lynxes remained at bay,—was fain to beg for mercy, and entreat him to reduce his quizzing to tones inaudible in the gallery.

But whatever the Archdeacon thought about the matter, let me trust that my readers know too well what they are about, to be ignorant what *I* was about; and not to appreciate the advantage of being able to carry on my flirtation under cover of the Archdeacon's roaring bass of applause at his kinsman's and the county member's manifestoes, breathing Bastilles and penal statutes in every period.

"Do you know, Mr. Wrottesley," said Caroline, when, in spite of the stentorian raillery of the burly priest, I found my way at last to their work-table, "do you know that Adela and I have been committing county treason to-day, and quarrelling with Doncaster for carrying you off! But for Charles and his bay mare, and the St. Leger, we might perhaps be able to induce you

to remain at the Hall till you have no choice but to return to Cambridge."

Almost blushing that the lady of my love should deliver such a compliment *à brûle pourpoint* without a blush, I replied as beseemed me, that "it would require very little pressing to determine me to send all the cups and sweepstakes of the United Kingdom to—(I paused in defining the whereabout calculated to convey the strongest attestation)—if I could only hope that my society was not quite so unwelcome to them now, as on occasion of my former visit?"—

And the simultaneousness with which both sisters ejaculated "Unwelcome? How could I suppose it!" would have done honour to the best rehearsed duet ever executed by Mario and Grisi.

"I supposed it," I said, "because a fatally good memory sometimes carried me back to certain days less pleasant than the present, when the Battle of Prague was played for my entertainment, and I was driven out like an enemy's dog to walk home in the snow."

"If you ever saw a strange hound introduced into a well-filled kennel, Mr. Wrottesley," said Adela, laughing, "you must have noticed how its new companions fall upon it, and make it afford proof of its quality. So it was with *us!* Don't look affronted at my comparing you to a puppy,—but so, I assure you it was!—We had been taught to believe that you were come to settle at the Hall, and play the mastiff over us all; and therefore attempted the first snarl."

"Which fairly drove me out of the neighbourhood!" said I. "Afraid that those who showed their teeth so soon, would end with biting, I hastened away lest I should receive a wound that could not be cured or forgiven."

"Better have stayed and defied us!" retorted the laughing beauty. "Puppy policy should have taught you that cowards create a double allowance of antagonists. However, you made proof of the truth of another proverb;—by 'running away,' you have been enabled to return and fight another day."

"Not to *fight*, thank Heaven!" cried I, with as tender a glance towards Caroline as I dared

adventure. "Nor should I presume to recur to those unpropitious days, but for my consciousness that there is a rainbow in the sky:—by what providence vouchsafed, I will not now inquire."

"Do pray inquire," exclaimed the outspoken Adela;—"for we have not the least objection to tell you! It was Dr. Temple who told us how pleasant a companion you had proved at the Rectory, on the very day we so inexcusably gruffed you away from the Elms."—

"*Dr. Temple?*" muttered I, a little astonished.

"And who congratulated us and himself on the acquisition you were likely to prove to the neighbourhood."

"Dr. Temple!" I again repeated, absolutely aghast. "Why from that day to this, he has never offered me the common civility of a morning visit, owed by one gentleman to another."

"Ay, but surely not by a middle-aged clergy-

man to a very young gentleman," remonstrated Adela.

"Better say *boy* at once, Miss Roxborough!" cried I, a little nettled.

"A very young gentleman, too, who, being in a position to confer obligations on him," added the gentle Caroline in a lower voice,— "demanded in any intercourse between them, the most circumspect maintenance of his dignity."—

"But why not speak fairly out, my dear Car?" rejoined Adela. "Since Mr. Wrottesley wishes us to be his friends, why not show him that we deserve to be such, by telling him the exact truth?"

Yet even while proceeding thus boldly to unfold what she knew would be offensive, Adela Roxborough's voice faltered; and she was scarcely audible when adding that the intelligence Dr. Temple had received of my proceedings at Cambridge, was not of a nature to make the clergyman of my parish *very* eager in his attentions."

"His brother the tutor, in short," said I, with the utmost bitterness, "was not only at the trouble to play the spy upon my conduct, but ungentlemanly enough to forward to my own neighbourhood notes of those boyish follies which he is paid for repressing in my companions!"

"Ungentlemanly and Henry Temple are words which, by no possibility, can ever be brought into conjunction!" retorted Adela with spirit. "The Doctor's information, I believe, was derived from ourselves,—who heard of your intimacy with billiard markers and blacklegs from a Cambridge man whom we met at the Duke of Sheffield's; a college friend of his son Lord John."—

"Tom Whichcote, for a thousand!" cried I, gasping for breath. "But why circulate what you could not be certain was true," added I,—addressing myself more particularly to Caroline; "in a quarter too where it must do me irreparable injury!"—

"Perhaps," interrupted Adela, coming to her

sister's aid, "we might be desirous of exposing you to admonition from one who is charged by the law of the land with the cure of your soul!"—

"And to whom it was essential to know and understand you," added Caroline, with so feeling a blush as to provoke me beyond description.

"That is to say, essential to understand the views and principles of the patron of Rainham!" cried I, throwing aside all reserve. "For after all, my offence in Dr. Temple's eyes was not that I played billiards, shirked chapel, or exceeded my allowance; but that I had promised the best living in my gift, without consulting him, to a bosom-friend of my own;—one of the best scholars at Cambridge, and worthiest creatures in the world!"—

A slight exclamation from the lips of Adela caused me to glance towards her sister, whom I beheld suddenly reduced to the whiteness and rigidity of marble. Lord Fortrose, who was approaching us at the moment, flew on hearing

Miss Roxborough's cry for air, in search of a glass of water.

But even when, after opening windows and imbibing a tumbler of iced water, the poor girl's complexion and presence of mind were tolerably restored, was it likely that I should forgive Henry Temple this open and unmistakeable demonstration in his favour, more particularly as, from that moment, the amenity previously exhibited towards me ceased; so as to leave no doubt of its having arisen, on the part of those two treacherous girls, from a project to entrap my good-will and extort a promise of patronage for "the tutor."

I went back to Cambridge hating Henry Temple with a degree of hatred, that would scarcely have been bitterer had he been once my bosom friend!—

CHAPTER XIII.

Leeze me on drink! It gie's us mair
Than either school or college;
It kindles wit, it waukens lair,
It pangs us fou o' knowledge.
But whisky-gill, or penny-stoup,
Or any stronger potion,
It never fails, on drinking deep,
To kittle up our notion,
By night or day.

BURNS.

EVERY now and then a tremendous uproar is made in the world, and a quantity of fire-and-faggot letters addressed to the editors of the Sunday papers, by those who, because they are lovers of license, fancy themselves lovers of liberty, and consequently sign themselves "Fiat Justitia," or "A True Briton,"—against the

abuses of university discipline and the tyranny of proctors. For my part, I only wonder how so many grains of gunpowder can be stowed together, within reach of lucifer-matches and tinder-boxes, as there exist in our universities, without explosions demanding a still stricter exercise of authority.

What a set we were in my time! There was a roaring blade,—an Honourable Blank Blank, living on the same staircase as myself—who, after figuring as an ensign in the Guards, and lieutenant of Hussars, and being disbanded after Waterloo, was reading for orders, for the benefit of a family living; a fellow capable of converting into Don Juans a whole cloister of Carthusians! In tickling up jugs of gin-punch, and other nameless modifications of the union of acid, sugar, spirit, and a slight tinge of *aqua pura*, the Broadway of New York might have become his scholar!—And after the gin-punch, what orgies!—

It is true, both the punch and the appendix disagreed a little with mathematics,—with

chapel,—with the decencies of college subordination; and, what was worse, brought me once more into collision with individuals towards whom companionship with Roxborough and his set had begun to inspire me with some disgust. But the man who "puts an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains,"—whether a Cantab revelling in gin-punch, or a Regent in Garus,—is as sure to stumble into a pitfall or lose himself in a quagmire, as the shipwrecked knaves in the "Tempest," after taking Caliban for their guide.

I was not, however, the only man fancying himself a fine gentleman, who forfeited his shape and character by tasting the Circean cup, —*i. e.*, the jugs of whiskey-punch of the Honourable Blank Blank. My friend Hampden—whose vulnerable heel lay (Irishly speaking) in his ear, and who, like Cassio, was to be beguiled at any hour of the day or night into an excess, no matter how perilous to body or soul, by the temptation of an "exquisite song,"—would have resisted the honourable punch-com-

pounder's Nepenthe, but for the trolling of his lays. But as he sang as well as he brewed, we lived and drank together, and, after drinking, broke the peace and the heads of constables;—and, but for the especial recommendation I had received from Wrottesley Rectory, to the tender mercies of the conscript fathers of my college, my university prospects and the Castles I had been building on their scaffold-poles, would have been speedily flung down in the dust.

It is not, I am afraid, in the nature of man—more especially of man being drunk—to enjoy his brutal pleasures to the utmost, without, in some way or other, making woman his victim.

There lived, just then, in one of what Bob Barker called the back-slums of Cambridge, a miserable atom of a tailor,—a thing of shreds and patches,—a botcher for gyps,—an every thing you please that is most ignominious of his ignominious calling;—who, in spite of his wretchedness, had managed to possess himself, in the shape of wife, of one of the prettiest little creatures in the world.

Though a Cambridge man, and having abided there from the time his goose was a gosling, Sam Nixon had known better than to marry one of his townswomen. As jealous as the Moor of Venice, he had gone in search of his partner for life as far as the daffodils of Cottenham; and Nancy was still the humble, simple, honest, little country girl he had taken from the churn and cheese-press to be his bride. Whether attached or not to the little tailor, she was attached to her duties; and, during her three years of married life, had stood and withstood as many sieges as the Rock of Gibraltar.

For a fellow unsettled in his conjugal reliance to reside within the precincts of a university, is much as if a hare were to make her form in a kennel of greyhounds. Poor Nixon, who made so little secret of his jealousy that he had been more than once rough-musicked by his neighbours for thrashing his pretty little wife, to punish her for being looked at by forward gownsmen, or moved by the same vague passion for coercion, which causes men to beat

their spaniels and walnut trees, in the hopes of mending them,—ought to have pitched his tent in Bath or Bloomsbury, or any other exclusive resort of the spinster species, rather than in ranting, roaring Cambridge. For both husband and wife led a sorry life of it. The moment it transpired among the under-graduates that an ineffectual attempt to deliver a letter to the tailor's wife, on the part of some beardless Lauzun, had been the cause of driving Nixon out of his wits, and terrifying his chaste moiety out of her skin, it became as favourite a joke to knock at the snip's door, and inquire "whether Nancy Nixon lived there?"—as the popular hoax of "Monsieur Tompson," or "*Portier, donne-moi une méche de tes cheveux.*"

Especially among the dissolute loungers with whom I was just then associating;—and, by degrees, what was sport to us, was nearly death to the friendless little woman: who was not only daily licked by her husband, but came to be regarded amongst her neighbours as a suspicious character. To afford a moment's excite-

ment to our worthless lives, the poor soul wasted the whole of hers in crying over a delicate child of two years old; who, in this perpetual fount of tears, seemed scarcely to recognise its once merry little mother.

I have known my punch-brewing neighbour bribe Hampden with one of his choicest songs, to go and knock at Nixon's door, or throw a nosegay into his wife's window; for the sole pleasure of seeing the irate little tailor emerge from his den, in his shirt sleeves and spectacles, foaming at the mouth and blaspheming while endeavouring to catch the offender in the fact; when he was saluted with shouts and cheers from our party, lying in ambush for the enjoyment of the pantomime. But of poor Nancy Nixon's bruises which were to be endured behind the curtain, which of us took thought? For what had a tailor's wife better to do in the world than be pinched and kicked, in order to afford sport for the Philistines!

One night, in the height of our drunken revels, an exploit was proposed by Hampden,

which, on the evening following, was duly carried into execution, without more evil aforethought on our part than the hope of getting rid of a few idle hours; though in its results, alas! the source of heartbreak to many.

Little Nixon was to be decoyed from home at nightfall, on pretence of a job, and locked up in the room of a gyp who was the Honourable Blank Blank's familiar spirit; and who, living as near the sky as the attics of Jesus could place him, was safe in his domestic castle against intrusion or enlargement.

As soon as the tailor was thus secured, Nancy was to be carried off in her turn by a message conveyed by another gyp, that she was wanted and waited for by her husband. The majority were for having her brought straight to Hampden's rooms, where one of our so-called wining parties was prepared:—an orgie well calculated to astonish the weak mind of poor Nancy. Some were of opinion that the tailor's pretty wife would make but a feigned resistance;

and take the goods the gods and Litchfield had provided for her in the shape of pine apple and champagne. *I* thought otherwise, (being one of those whose homage she had indignantly rejected;) and it was at my suggestion that preparations were made for reducing her to stillness in case she proved hard to manage.

For the emended edition of our plot consisted in conveying her to the rooms of some sober scholar,—some reputed misogynist, where she was "to be left till called for;" that is till Samuel Nixon in person was brought to convict her of the delinquency of being surprised in the domicile of an under-graduate. Not a blockhead of us but had of course some favourite aversion to put forward for the unappropriated place of victim in the *dramatis personæ*. Every body had some one to suggest,—his tutor,—his German master,—his cousin,—or the sap whose acquirements put his own duncehood to shame. At length, we drew lots for the delight of singling out the unhappy wretch to be hoaxed; and most unluckily, chance favoured myself!

For it happened that I owed a grudge to Andrew Grove for a tremendously long homily which he had taken the liberty of addressing to me in writing; (seeing that to his *viva voce* lessons I had long turned a deaf ear;) to implore me "on the knees of his heart" not to tarnish the honour of a destiny bright and hopeful as mine, by associating with those who were bankrupts in reputation as well as paupers in principle and intellect.

"By Jove, Master Andrew shall pay for his preaching!" was my rapid resolve. "Andrew Grove, that Joseph-Surface man of sentiment and pattern of decorum, shall for once be put to the blush!"—

The project prospered in all its preliminaries. The little tailor threw himself headlong into the snare; and Mrs. Nixon, when summoned in her husband's name to bring his pattern-book and measures to certain rooms in —— Hall, to which she was carefully conducted by our gyp, saw nothing to excite her alarm unless the chance of a cuffing for her pains, if she presumed to loiter by the way.

But alas! thanks to chapel and other obstacles, the whole thing was postponed till so late an hour, that, by the time the little woman crossed the threshold of our pandemonium, a sufficient number of bottles of claret had been discussed, to justify the agony of alarm with which she started back, and tried to make her escape, on perceiving

> Our table richly spread
> Without a lady at the head;

adorned with glaring lights and glowing faces!

"Nancy Nixon, Nancy Nixon for ever!—Bumpers and three times three with one cheer more for Nancy Nixon!"—was the universal cry, when her conductor, after coolly locking the door behind her, placed the key in his pocket.

And Nancy's tearful appeal to our humanity, to let her take her departure quietly before her absence from home had been noticed, or any thing occurred to bring down retribution on her head, was drowned in loud hurrahs in her honour.

The terrified woman had nothing for it but to sink down in the furthest chair, cover her pale face with her handkerchief, and weep. As to accepting our invitation to a place at table or a glass of Blank Blank's nameless nectar, either iced or steaming, the Lady in Comus could not have been more chastely temperate.

"Indeed and indeed, gentlemen, I am an honest woman! Nixon, when he comes to hear of this, will break every bone in my skin!" was sobbed out at intervals by way of reply to our importunities.

But with the fear of the proctor before our eyes,—albeit those eyes saw none of the clearest, —it became necessary to hurry the *finale* of the drama. And when the poor terrified Nancy proceeded to shriek and threaten, on seeing us rise tumultuously from table for a sortie, swearing that she must bear us company,—to my shame be it written, that I was the first to propose stopping her cries with a handkerchief, and carrying her off like a struggling Sabine by force of arms!

I had some sort of idea that Andrew, who habitually rose before either sun or lark, would have retired to rest before we attempted to storm his castle; and I anticipated some sport, when roused by our loud knocking, he proceeded to open the door, attired in either his dressing-gown or less, we thrust into his room our trembling captive, and by a precipitate flight, left him without defence or apology to meet the fury of her exasperated husband.

But I had reckoned falsely. The Andrew who answered to our impertinent summons was not only up and dressed, but much more himself than any one of our riotous party. That he could not at first be made to understand what we were come about, was no proof to the contrary; for what rational being was likely to preconceive so cruel an outrage? And that he fancied the half-fainting woman suddenly borne into his chamber, to be the victim of some painful accident, and that we were bringing her there for refuge and succour, was an interpretation that only too well explained the difference

between *his* motives and conduct, and our own.

But the moment Andrew began to suspect that he was the object of a mystification, his blood kindled. Uncertain, at first, whether the female we had seated in the arm-chair beside his study-table, covered with important papers and laborious calculations, were our victim or accomplice,—whether she were weeping for shame or crying drunk,—there was nothing to divert his attention from ourselves.

With manly frankness, he singled me out for an explanation.

"Wrottesley!" cried he, trembling in voice and limb with ill-repressed indignation, "you are the only person here justified by even the poor plea of acquaintanceship, in intruding upon me at this hour, in pursuance, I presume, of some drunken frolic. It is therefore from *you* I exact your immediate departure; and *to* you I look for an apology at some more sober moment."

"Apology, indeed?—Drunken frolic?"—

Shouts of derision from the whole party greeted his oration. While Hampden coolly offered him a cigar by way of refreshment, the rest of the party affected to make themselves most audaciously at home.

But by this time, Nancy, whose hearing was not gagged as well as her lips, began to understand what was going on.—Starting from her seat, she clung to the arm of Andrew, as he was preparing for the summary ejectment of Lord Hampden, who was nearest the door; and drew all his attention towards her miserable plight.

The botcher was perhaps his tailor. For no sooner had he turned the light of the shaded lamp in which he was accustomed to burn his midnight oil, upon the features of the unfortunate woman clinging to him for protection, than he exclaimed "Mrs. Nixon? Gracious Heavens! *Poor* Mrs. Nixon!" — and placed her in a chair with as much deference as *I* might have used towards Caroline Roxborough.

Again, our acclamations caused the walls to

shake. "Vivant Nancy Nixon and Amadis de Gaul!" cried one and all. To which I added, more coarsely than the rest, "Vivant the tailor's wife and Andrew of Wilsbury Farm!"

Already, however, the imperfect utterance of the unfortunate Nancy had rendered him cognizant of her situation; and hastily, but with gentle care, he drew the handkerchief from her mouth.—Alas! it was covered with stains; and a frightful flow of blood followed its removal.

"Wretches!" cried Andrew, looking fiercely at those whose cry of triumph was still unquelled.

"Not wretches, but wretch!" interrupted I with drunken pertinacity. "Address yourself to *me*, Mr. Redresser of Grievances. It was *I* who proposed the gagging!"

"*Coward!*" was all he *did* say to the reeling fool who advanced threateningly towards him. Upon which, with a single blow, I felled him to the ground, and placed my foot upon him as he lay.

"Bravo, Wrottesley! — Bravo, bravissimo,

Wrottesley!" resounded on all sides from those who attributed to strength and courage what was the mere result of his unguarded attitude.

But so absorbed was *I* in my triumph, and *they* in their gratulations, that the proctor and his myrmidons had effected their entrance unobserved by the door through which one of our party, more chicken-hearted or more overcome by wine than the rest, had made his escape during the uproar, leaving it open behind him.

The noise and confusion prevalent in the room seemed to exhibit, in the light of a drunken brawl, what our turbulent passage through the streets with poor Nancy, had caused to be represented to him in still darker colours, so as to hasten him in full authority to the spot.

But, even in this point of view, there were two objects present demanding immediate consideration.—Andrew, sprawling helpless, as if blind drunk on the floor; and Mrs. Nixon,

with her features swollen, and her disordered dress spattered with blood.

"I assure you, Sir," hiccupped Hampden, "that we are here only from motives of humanity—only, Sir, with the most honourable intentions. But for us, this unfortunate female, —who, fall—fallen as she is, has still a claim to the pro—protection, from every man of honour, d—due to the meanest of her sex—would have fallen a victim to ass—ass—assassination."

"Yes, Sir; yonder drunken miscreant would have murdered her!" interposed the Honourable Blank Blank,—who sadly wanted to get the Riot Act read, that we might disperse at once; when a few choice spirits would probably make their way back to his rooms, to drink up what remained of his potations.

"But how came it, Sir, that this unfortunate female was conveyed hither by violence?"

"Nancy Nixon, I declare!" suggested, half aside, one of the constables.—

"That she was conveyed hither, I say, by a breach of the public peace?" resumed the

proctor. — "Such, I think," added he in a whisper, addressing his vergers, "was the information I received?"

"The wretch lying at your feet, Sir, was the party by whom she was torn from her unfortunate husband's violated home," resumed Hampden, with drunken solemnity. "If we consented to escort him, it was with the humane intent of rendering assistance, in case of need, to the distressed female."

"I scarcely know what to make of it at all!" sighed the proctor,—shrugging his shoulders with the distressed look of the Burgomaster of Saardam (just then rendered popular by Liston.) "To-morrow, the business shall be investigated. Meanwhile, these offenders,—this drunkard and his miserable companion,"—continued he, glancing at the suffering Nancy, and still prostrate Andrew, "shall pass the night in the Spinny."

They passed it there;—in that self-same noisome den which has lately acquired a wretched notoriety. But even on the morrow

the mystery was but imperfectly cleared up. Whether, when it came to the scratch, the craven tailor had not courage to denounce "a nob" like Hampden, and a set of dare-devils like his associates,—or whether, from the civility with which Andrew Grove had uniformly treated his wife, when giving orders for the patching or turning of his waistcoats, he really inferred undue intimacy between them,—the fact of having discovered Nancy exactly where an anonymous letter had warned him that, when released from durance at Jesus, he *should* find her—at Andrew's rooms, while the gyp by whom he had been captured, and at last enlarged, had been careful to mention the same unlucky name as that of his employer,—he seemed convinced of the culpability of the parties.

His testimony, at all events, was such that *we* were fully exonerated, and punished only by a slight fine, and an any thing but slight homily, in retribution of our irregularity of hours and habits; while Nancy was delivered over to the

correction of her husband; and Andrew, the partner of her delinquency,—the unprotected, nameless scrub, whose previous correctness of reputation seemed to render him, in this discovery, only the greater Tartuffe,—Andrew, with his face still swollen from my blow, and his heart swelling under a sense of injustice,—Andrew was sentenced to rustication!

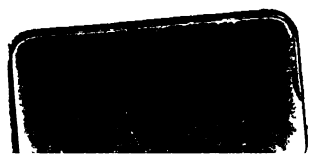
Like most people outrageously drunk overnight, we were still only half sober when the investigation took place; and in the feverishness of our souls and bodies, thought it an excellent joke to let the friendless paria of Peter House bear the penalty of our folly. And when, at a later period of compunction, I endeavoured to remedy the evil, by myself addressing to the Caput and the masters of both our colleges, a frank confession of my share in the trespass, and a full and perfect exculpation of Andrew,—I passed simply for a Pythias sacrificing myself for my Damon; and was even complimented for my generosity on the occasion, by more than one of the

Dons, who, thanks to Dr. Temple's "Open Sesame," were unwilling to close their hearts against the excellence of my venison and character.

I did no good to Andrew therefore, though some harm to myself. So far from reversing his sentence, all that I asserted was distorted into proof, that if I had been the ringleader of the gang, he,—whom the very husband of the woman "taken in being gagged," denounced as criminal, — he, whom circumstantial evidence proved to be my intimate friend, — was, to say the least of it, an active accomplice. Was it likely that I, whose familiar visits to him had often excited wonder in his college, where his reserved habits of life and sturdy sense of independence rendered him far from a favourite, should really have dealt him the knock-down blow which was evidently invented to palliate the disgraceful state of intoxication in which he was detected?—

No! An example, they said, was wanted; and poor Andrew's sentence was confirmed.

But my own personal dignity lost so much by the investigation, and the reprimand and affronts I received in its progress, that I had no choice for it, but in my turn to quit Cambridge.

END OF VOL. I.

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